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Geneva

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Johan Vande Lanotte, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Budget, Social Integration and Social Economy of Belgium.

Mr. Vande Lanotte (Belgium) (*spoke in French*): At the outset, I wish to express my gratitude to the Secretary-General and to the Division for Social Policy and Development of the Secretariat for the preparatory work that has gone into the special session of the General Assembly. My gratitude also goes to the Chairman of the Preparatory Committee and the Working Groups, who have shown as much diplomatic ability as perseverance in the negotiations under way. I associate myself with my Portuguese colleague, Mr. Rodrigues, who spoke on behalf of the European Union.

Five years ago, in Copenhagen, as Government representatives we approved a number of international commitments in the social area. That important meeting was one element of a long series of United Nations Conferences over the course of the last 10 years which have placed the concept of sustainable human development on the international political agenda. The conviction that economic growth and development must be accompanied by an appropriate social policy and ecological concerns are the basis of this concept. None of the areas can be developed without basic concern for others and taking into account the necessity for cohesion between them. A coherent vision of sustainable development must also include a policy focused on equal opportunity.

Over the past five years, the pace of globalization has been stronger. This economic process creates progress and new challenges, unequal economic growth and well-being, the availability of new technologies and an explosion in the area of international communications. However, this globalization process also confirms that the economic, social and ecological dimensions of development are interdependent. A healthy economic base in and of itself does not guarantee that poverty and social exclusion will be eliminated. Economic progress cannot be established, nor can it be balanced without social development that enhances the active participation of individuals in the programmes that concern them.

The momentum of globalization has shown the shortcomings in the area of discipline and self-regulation in international economic events. Increased

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financial flows, which are sometimes purely speculative in nature and do not always actually follow purely economic logic, can increase the cycles of growth and stagnation. Many countries have experienced at their own expense the social repercussions of anarchy within the system. Efforts in the area of employment and access to social assistance have suffered the most.

International guidelines are devoid of meaning if they are not placed within an international legislative framework. The current evaluation process of the Copenhagen commitments shows that, in many countries, success has been achieved in the area of social policy objectives. Other initiatives are still essential. For my country, these initiatives will fit, over the next few years, within a new socio-economic strategy decided upon by the European Union at the Lisbon Council in March last year. Belgium is already drafting a national plan of action on poverty and social exclusion, which should be completed by the beginning of the fall.

Belgium supports the proposal made by the Commission at the European Council meeting on a plan for the eradication of poverty and proposes for its partners the following suggestion regarding options on standards with respect to European poverty: over the short term, a standard for the level of poverty by countries of the European Union that would correspond to half of the average income per household; over the long term, a standard established per country on the basis of a basket of consumer goods and services considered to be strictly necessary.

The common objective should be to reduce poverty in the European Union by half by 2010. For Belgium this would mean that 700,000 individuals or approximately 300,000 families are currently poor, and therefore we should reach half that figure.

The adoption at this meeting of the objective to reduce the number of people living in extreme poverty by half by 2015 makes me very glad. After all, there has been no significant progress since the Copenhagen Summit. In fact, the figures indicate that the trend is getting worse. The struggle against poverty, such as the one led by the international community, the United Nations and its development funds, international financial organizations and several regional institutions, should contribute even more to the implementation of the Copenhagen conclusions. There, in the developed countries, poverty is often hidden by the problem of redistribution; the absence of economic growth often stops social development in the poor countries. It is clear to the Belgian Government that the Copenhagen objectives must be supported through dialogue and cooperation at the international level.

The Government has spoken in favour of a significant increase in the development budget over the course of the next few years following legislation, devoting, in accordance with agreed international principles, at least 20 per cent to social projects.

At the same time, the Government is considering how it can achieve the full and swift implementation of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative for the poorest indebted countries through its national budget.

The Portuguese presidency has already stressed that development, democracy and respect for human rights are interlinked. Sustainable social development therefore requires good management that commits adequate means to social objectives such as education and health care.

Within the context of respect for social rights, the implementation of the 1998 Declaration of the International Labour Organization (ILO) on the principles and fundamental rights to work are very important for the international community. Universal ratification and the implementation of the most important ILO Conventions are high priorities. They guarantee a balanced social model on the world level. Technical assistance should benefit countries that still have difficulty meeting their international obligations.

At the beginning of this month, the Belgian section of the inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), held, with the representatives of the non-governmental sector, a symposium on the possibility of a tax on international financial transactions. The Belgian Government is ready to consider the feasibility of and possible modalities for such a proposal at international forums.

A third conference on the least developed countries will be held in Brussels next May, at the initiative of the European Union and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. We hope that the European proposals submitted at that meeting will allow upgraded access to the market for the products of these countries. A wider participation

of these countries in world trade should be made easier by technical assistance, which would be very effective in this area.

In conclusion, I would like to express the hope that this important meeting will lead to a strengthened and more operational implementation of the Programme of Action agreed to five years ago at Copenhagen. We shall achieve this, thanks to strengthened international cooperation and in a spirit of international solidarity.

The President: I thank the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of the Budget, Social Integration and Social Economy of Belgium. I call on Her Excellency Ms. Zeljka Antunovic, Deputy Prime Minister of Croatia.

Ms. Antunovic (Croatia): It is my pleasure and honour to be able to address participants today on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Croatia at the special session of the General Assembly five years after Copenhagen.

Two major world conferences marked the year 1995, at which representatives of all countries of the world reaffirmed their commitment to promote human rights in general, and particularly economic, social and cultural rights. The World Summit on Social Development brought together the largest gathering of heads of State and Government, who undertook a political commitment to fight poverty, create productive jobs and strengthen the social fabric to establish stable, safe and just societies. This reflected the wide consensus on the central role of remunerative employment in poverty reduction.

The World Summit confirmed that despite their aspirations and hopes, human rights advocates of the middle of this century, have, unlike their forebears of the eighteenth century, who gained civil rights, and those of the nineteenth century, who gained political rights, failed to fully exercise social rights. The conclusions of the World Summit clearly indicated that we are still far from attaining this goal and once again specified the actions necessary to achieve it. Moreover, the Summit recognized the inseparability of civil and political rights, on the one hand, and social rights, on the other hand. As it was pointed out in the Declaration itself, the Copenhagen Summit was one of hope, commitment and action.

An important achievement of the Summit was the marked transition away from approaches focusing on market liberalization to those directed towards social development. Focusing on three main problems — poverty, unemployment and social exclusion — the Summit identified new challenges and at the same time defined the social component as an essential element of global economic development.

It is precisely globalization, technological progress and modernization that represent the new challenges in the fulfilment of commitments made and the realization of goals set by the Summit. As the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration noted, globalization opens new opportunities for sustained economic growth and development of the world economy, particularly in developing countries. But at the same time, the rapid processes of change and adjustment have been accompanied by intensified poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Globalization and interdependence have provided beneficial opportunities, but have also brought potential damage and costs.

Economic growth has been impressive in some countries and disappointing in others. The present socio-economic mosaic reveals a growing divide among nations, as well as dislocation among different groups within the same country. The gains from globalization have not been equally shared and its benefits are not reaching enough people. Current patterns of globalization have contributed to a sense of insecurity, as some countries, including developing countries and countries with economies in transition, have been marginalized from the global economy. It is these countries that are hindered the most in their economic development by being denied access to monetary institutions and world trade.

If well-structured and sequenced, trade liberalization can be an engine for development and poverty reduction. It may stimulate export opportunities and import competition, and the doors to liberalization, opened in domestic foreign partnerships, may create positive incentives. Without this, it is all but impossible for most countries to create a stable environment that prevents social exclusion.

In this sense, it has become essential to work towards closer integration between economic and social policies, both at the international and national levels. At the international level this implies

developing closer collaboration between international, economic and financial organizations and organizations that have a social mandate. In this way, they can jointly assist in fulfilling the goals defined at the Summit: the eradication of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion. In this regard, we welcome the efforts made by the United Nations Secretary-General to strengthen ties between the United Nations and international financial institutions in an effort to strike a balance between social and economic needs for development, and also welcome General Assembly resolution 54/196, on a planned high-level international intergovernmental event on financing for development.

The Croatian Government is attempting to create an environment that enables sustainable growth by dedicating its efforts to the individual. We believe that such an environment can be achieved only through interaction between economic and social development, with the ultimate goal of pursuing the improvement of living standards for all and facilitating full and free participation in the economic, political and social arena without discrimination.

The eradication of poverty, the attainment of full employment and respect for human dignity at the highest level, as well as equal opportunity for all, are the fundamental values advocated by the Croatian Government. The policy of the Croatian Government is mainly aimed at promoting social development by creating a society that not only guarantees everyone the opportunity for self-sufficiency and active participation in the community, but also ensures that vulnerable groups have access to social services, so as to prevent social exclusion and reduce poverty. Fighting poverty and unemployment has proved doubly difficult for Croatia, as we are also experiencing the challenges of transition, which have not proved to be at all simple or short, but complex and long, with many harsh upheavals and much stress. We can only hope that the new impetus my Government has given to market and social reforms shall help to successfully expedite this transition.

Furthermore, the priority goals of the Croatian Government still include reconciliation and social reintegration in territories affected by the war, particularly in regard to enabling social and economic reintegration of returnees by encouraging economic revitalization and employment. The Croatian Government has also adopted many policy measures in the fields of employment, health, promotion of the role of women, children's rights and other measures to implement the goals set out in Copenhagen. While we are aware that more still needs to be done, we believe that we are heading in the right direction. International cooperation, including with international trade and financial institutions, can play a special role in this regard.

Croatia is also aware that the assistance and support of social partners and representatives of civil society in the formulation and implementation of planned reforms, programmes and policies is a prerequisite for success. In this respect, encouraging cooperation and dialogue between Governments and civil society plays a crucial role. Civil society actors and their development are precisely that which will guarantee that policies will always be supervised and evaluated.

At a time when global implementation of the commitments made at the Summit has barely begun, this same approach could be accepted as one way of hastening fulfilment of these commitments. It is clear that the serious impediments to social development identified at the Summit still persist, and that much more work and effort is required to fulfil the tasks set at Copenhagen.

As a final note, Croatia believes that it would be desirable to specify time limits for their achievement and to assume responsibility for national and international actions that are directed towards our common goal: the achievement of people-centred sustainable development.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Ali Nagiyev, Minister of Labour and Social Security of Azerbaijan.

Mr. Nagiyev (Azerbaijan) (*spoke in Russian*): The report presented by the Secretary-General has demonstrated once again that the seriousness of the social-economic situation in the world compels us to seek new approaches and to undertake new measures aimed at overcoming the current lack of confidence and the tension with regard to human rights and other challenges in the social-development field. It has become increasingly evident that no country can pursue its economic and social policies in isolation from the developments in the world. This fact is reflected today in the words of concern that have been expressed about the globalization process. Our forum proves that

international cooperation and solidarity are vitally important factors for sustainable social development.

In the period since the Copenhagen Summit, economic reform in the Republic of Azerbaijan has been picking up speed and becoming irreversible. The economic crisis that swept the country in the early 1990s has been brought to an end. Considerable work has been done to foster economic recovery. It has become clear that there are no quick fixes, either on the global level or, for example, in our country. The main tasks facing us all are the basic reconstruction of our economies and ensuring sustainable growth.

At the same time, it has become understood that addressing social problems must be an integral part of the reform process. In this regard, I would like to refer to the address of former United States President Franklin Roosevelt to the International Labour Organization (ILO) Conference in Washington in 1941. He said that, both in international and national affairs, economic policy cannot be an end in itself; it must always be a means to achieve social goals.

At present, the fundamental government strategy for fighting poverty in the Republic of Azerbaijan involves developing reforms in the social sphere. The important components of this reform are properly targeting subsidies and pensions, creating jobs for socially vulnerable groups of the population, giving preferential treatment in education and health, and elaborating and implementing vigorous steps to integrate socially vulnerable groups of the population in the social-development process.

A great deal of work is being done on the development of institutional reforms. Since the Copenhagen Summit more than 30 pieces of legislation have been adopted. These laws are in line with international legal norms, and they regulate the social development of the country. We have worked out, for instance, a policy statement regarding reform of the pension system, and major strategic guidelines regarding poverty eradication. A policy statement on demographic development has been adopted. Migration policy has been defined, and the legislative foundation in this field has been enhanced.

One of the effective measures for providing the population social protection and for implementing our commitments over the past five years has been an active employment policy — because paid work is the best possible protection from poverty. In this regard, the Government has made sustained efforts aimed at the development of the employment system throughout the country. These efforts have included legal measures and also organizational procedures aimed at reducing poverty by stimulating productive, profitable and sustainable employment. With the goal of solving the country's employment problems and ensuring sustainable livelihoods, we are implementing policies aimed at maintaining macroeconomic stability, developing the private sector, achieving labour-market efficiency and enhancing employment of socially vulnerable groups of the population.

International organizations — including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), ILO, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) — are playing an increasingly active role in solving social problems in the Republic of Azerbaijan. Through the joint efforts of these and other organizations and the Republic of Azerbaijan, a number of projects on population development, employment, reproductive health, the regulation of migration and reforms in the pension system, the development of education and the social protection of children have been developed and are being implemented. This cooperation provides an active mechanism for taking successful action and for ensuring integrated approaches to the development of social policy in our country. At the same time, we believe that it is necessary to improve the quality of joint activities in order to achieve effective results and bring about the social development of our society.

In the presented report, stress is laid on the development of structures not owned by the State. This testifies to the important role played by non-governmental organizations and the private sector in the development of social welfare within society. We think that in our country the further development of joint actions between State bodies and the non-governmental sector will mobilize the necessary resources and allow for yet greater success in the reintegration of socially vulnerable groups.

Significant accomplishments have been made in the sphere of health care over the last five years. The ongoing transformation of our health-care system has

already yielded results. The scope of services has been broadened, and other relevant activities in the health sphere have been enhanced — in particular in the areas of reproductive health services and family planning. The Government is planning to further develop the principles of general access to basic medical services, especially for disabled persons, refugees and internally displaced persons — the poorest groups of our population.

Another concrete feature of our social-development activities since Copenhagen is the development of a gender policy. A State policy and measures for the enhancement of gender relations in the Republic of Azerbaijan have been defined.

National programmes relating to "the young family" have been elaborated for the period 1999-2003. We have also elaborated programmes of action for the women of Azerbaijan for the period 1999-2003 and programmes on the prevention of disabilities, rehabilitation and social protection for disabled persons for the period 1999-2002. A programme to solve the problems facing refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as other programme packages, have been elaborated, as have basic strategic directions and specific measures to integrate the above-mentioned groups of the population into the society. The implementation of these proposed programmes requires closer coordination of the relevant State bodies as well as financial support from foreign donors. Otherwise, as international experience suggests, these documents will remain only the good intentions of the Government.

Concurrently, despite the concrete measures that are being taken to implement our commitments, various factors are making this difficult. The political and economic past of Azerbaijan, the aggression and occupation by Armenia of more than 20 per cent of our territory, and the presence of a large army of refugees and internally displaced persons, as well as the problems of the transition period, have led to the persistence of poverty in our country.

It is necessary to note that the ongoing Armenian aggression restricts our ability to implement the specific national commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit, including those involving the repatriation and reintegration of refugees and internally displaced persons into the society. In this connection, Azerbaijan fully supports the paragraph 7 *bis* of the political declaration of the final document under discussion. Today when regional conflicts are threatening peace, international cooperation, with the active participation of all parties, is required as never before.

The period since the Copenhagen Summit has shown that the direction pursued by the Government of the Azerbaijan Republic in order to fulfil commitments related to the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit for Social Development has been justified by concrete results. At the same time, despite the growing awareness of the contribution of human-resource development to economic and social progress, the basic social sectors — such as social protection and labour, education and health care — require a new level of appraisal and need to be enriched by new strategies and decisions. I believe that the consensus achieved at this forum on our future actions will allow us to make more tangible progress in reducing the acute problems of poverty and in bringing about social progress for all.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Abdurahman Mohamed Shalghem, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya.

Mr. Shalghem (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to begin by congratulating you, Sir, and the other members of the Bureau on the excellent manner in which you are conducting the work of this special session of the General Assembly. I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General and to the Preparatory Committee. They have done outstanding work in preparing for this session. I would like to congratulate them on the high quality of the documents that we have before us. I am sure they will contribute to the success of our work and will allow us to achieve tangible and positive results.

Five years have passed since the Programme of Action and the Declaration were adopted in Copenhagen. Of course in these years there have been a great many positive developments as a result of those instruments. We can certainly say today that the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action have made a tangible contribution to enhancing awareness within the international community as to the importance of social development. We have also managed to stress the idea of people-centred development, of the individual human being at the very heart of the development process.

The international community is now aware of its obligation to bring about social development in order to improve the quality of life for human beings throughout the world. This clearly involves eradicating poverty, generating opportunities for productive employment, bringing about social reintegration and integration, and allowing everyone within society to participate in the development and decision-making processes within their own society.

All of this, then, is very positive, as we review what has been achieved over the past five years as a result of the Copenhagen Summit. It is also clear that the international community wants to move forward. But alongside this, we must admit that what has actually been achieved is rather modest. The rich are still becoming richer and the poor are still becoming poorer. More than 1 billion people live in abject poverty today. More and more people throughout the world are unemployed. Social inequalities are increasing, and the gap between rich and poor is becoming wider in many countries. All of this is leading to problems of many types and indeed is threatening peace and stability in many countries.

The Copenhagen Declaration talks about creating an enabling environment in social, economic and political terms in order to allow people to enjoy the fruits of social development. This clearly means that we have to strengthen and improve international, regional and subregional cooperation if we are to foster social development in a spirit of partnership.

Many developing countries today have indeed done their duty. They have done what they can do at the national level to bring about social development. Nonetheless, we have to admit that we do not yet have the whole enabling environment that is required if these countries are truly to attain the objectives set out in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action.

Official development assistance remains very modest. And when one looks at the level of official development assistance and at the level of debts and debt-servicing charges that have to be paid by developing countries, one sees that there is an obstacle to social and economic development. This in fact means that it is not possible for the domestic products of many developing countries to make it to the international market at all. And it is far less possible for these products to be marketed internationally at reasonable prices.

Of course it was recognized that eradicating poverty and the realization of the other components of the Declaration have to be a national responsibility, but it was also recognized that it is possible to eradicate poverty only if there is a general commitment to that effect within the international community. This being the case, we are here to reiterate our commitments and our willingness to fight poverty, because it does in fact threaten world peace and security.

We must be ready and willing to bring to an end the terrible problems we face in the world today. Terrorism, including State terrorism, hunger, malnutrition, foreign occupation, drug addiction and similar problems all arise from the basic problem of poverty. Of course there is also the problem of disease, of combating malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS, to name but a few.

So what are we going to do in practical terms? We have to take some pragmatic and valuable steps that will allow us to get down to the work of reforming international financial institutions and to render decision-making processes at the international level more democratic and transparent, so that everyone can participate in them properly. Such actions would allow us to combat the negative effects of globalization, particularly the marginalization of developing countries within the global economic system.

The social and economic situation in Africa remains critical. Despite all efforts exerted by African countries themselves, trying to meet their commitments, poverty remains an integral part of life in most African countries today. In addition, there are the other scourges that these countries face, such as AIDS, malaria and so on.

The situation in Africa today is tragic, and it demands a serious response from the international community. We need to help the continent of Africa to overcome the problems and conflicts it faces. We need to enhance regional mechanisms that will allow peace and stability to return to Africa, so that the dark continent can finally play its rightful role in the family of nations.

Of course the very difficult conditions imposed by international financial institutions make life almost impossible for African countries. Clearly, if we are to

tackle this problem, we need to adopt a convention that at the very least would guarantee fair and reasonable prices for the products of African countries in global markets. We must also lift the barriers that prevent the products of these countries from reaching international markets. Measures must be taken if we are to find a solution to the external-debt problem, which many of these countries also face.

It is not enough just to cancel the debt of a few least-developed countries. This in itself is not sufficient. What we need is to cancel the debts of all African countries. After all, this is the least that the countries that have pillaged the continent of Africa for many centuries can do.

In my country, of course, we do our utmost to seek to put an end to these types of problems, and surely our brother and President Al-Qadhafi spares no effort in seeking to end conflicts raging in Africa today. What he has done so far has indeed been successful, and the Sirte agreement attests to that. That agreement put an end to the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Great Lakes region. The Libyan Arab Jamahiriya certainly made a significant contribution to achieving those positive conclusions. We are also doing our utmost to ensure that refugees and displaced persons throughout Africa can enjoy medical and nutritional services.

Nonetheless, certain economic restrictions have been imposed on our country by the United States of America. This has led to a situation of virtual embargo. Yet, despite all that, we have gone on and have sought to develop education and the health sector in our country. I repeat, despite all that, the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya has undertaken a number of measures to make the best possible use of its material resources. We have adopted various pieces of legislation intended to improve employment policies throughout the country, improve health care and ensure that education and good housing are available to everyone. We are trying to break the vicious circle of poverty in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya and allow our people to live in peace and social well-being.

We have adopted a special system of economic partnership that allows everyone in our society to participate. We have various plans that, for instance, give each citizen of the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya the right to housing and comprehensive health care. That cannot be said even of some highly developed countries.

It should also be noted that the illiteracy rate has dropped. It was 22 per cent five years ago and is now only 18 per cent. So, again, we are winning the fight.

All this is based on a clear strategy, a strategy of economic partnership activities in which everyone participates. We do not have a system whereby salary is paid in an old-fashioned way; we have a system whereby everyone is allowed to participate in the cooperative in which they work, and this allows everyone to play a role in the country's economic life on a fair and equal footing.

In 1999, more than 3,000 cooperatives were set up in our production and services sector. We are trying to ensure that everyone enjoys equal opportunity to participate in the country's economic life, so that people do not have to live artificially, as they did in the past. This has been successful. We have been able to increase our productivity. We have also been able to increase output in the agricultural sector of the country. This has enhanced our food security.

In conclusion, I assure the Assembly that we look to this special session with great interest. We hope that we will finally be able to implement the decisions we took five years ago at Copenhagen. We hope that no international effort will be spared in seeking to attain the goals of Copenhagen. It goes without saying that holding this special session in Switzerland is very significant. After all, Switzerland is a very rich country. It has enormous resources, and the fact that everyone has come here means that we all have a real chance and real encouragement to reaffirm our commitment to the Copenhagen goals.

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Aurelio Varela, Minister of the Secretariat for Social Policy of Paraguay.

Mr. Varela (Paraguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): The delegation of Paraguay, which I am honoured to lead, is participating in this twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly to assess the progress and shortcomings in the implementation of the commitments and the Programme of Action adopted in 1995 at Copenhagen. Five years after that event, we are participating with great interest and expectations, since social development in Paraguay is a priority, and our

efforts are devoted to seeking permanent solutions to the problems of poverty, inequality and exclusion.

At the end of the Copenhagen Summit, we had great hopes that the commitments undertaken by the developed countries and by those countries undergoing development and hoping for greater development could bring immediate benefits and that the globalization process on which we are embarked would bring solutions and would not exacerbate existing problems. We believe that developed and developing countries must work together harmoniously, creating greater opportunities for growth for the less developed countries, since economy is the basic foundation for generating, maintaining and consolidating broad social development that will benefit equitably the neediest.

However, despite the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations among countries and the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO), we continue to see the same problems of access to markets to sell agricultural products. We also note that this production is not competitive with, nor does it have the same selling opportunities as, the production of developed countries, since the latter have excessive subsidies that distort the concept of agricultural production with strange ideas, such as multifunctionality of agriculture, or because concepts that are alien to international trade are introduced, such as labour conditions or environmental matters.

Paraguay is a founding member State of the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR), together with Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay; Chile and Bolivia are associated countries. Paraguay is one of the relatively least developed countries and is landlocked, which places us at a disadvantage in terms of international trade. Therefore, we require broad understanding and international solidarity from transit countries and those that have a coastline, in order to be able to generate appropriate conditions for trade so that we can compete on an equal footing with the countries that have a coastline.

In 1989, at the end of a period of authoritarian Government, a process of democratizing institutions and building a legal framework was begun in my country, which initiated a new phase in national life. Until now, the main goal of successive transitional Governments has been the consolidation of democracy and ensuring representative and participative democracy in full freedom and with full respect for human rights.

The current Government of Mr. Luis Angel González Macchi has envisaged consultation with and the wide participation of all political parties in order to form a Government of national unity to generate conditions of governability, democratic consolidation, security and internal stability so that we can face the task of economic development and focus successfully on a sustainable process of social development.

Since Copenhagen, five years ago, Paraguay has experienced unfavourable times in the political and economic spheres, which has had repercussions on social development. However, at the end of 1995 there was significant progress, and as an immediate result of the Summit, with the creation of the Secretariat for Social Policy of the Presidency of the Republic, with two strategic axes of management aimed at formulating social policies and at financing projects to fight poverty and to care for vulnerable groups through social investment funds.

In 1996, with United Nations support, the Secretariat for Social Policy formulated a strategic 20-year plan for social development, which identified 3 substantive challenges to progress in the area of social development. The first challenge is to achieve a sustained pace of economic growth that provides the necessary framework to generate productive opportunities and the resources necessary to finance social development. The second challenge is to reach an integrated and structural solution to the problem of rural poverty. The third challenge is to build the base of a modern social policy focused on increasing the productive capacities of people and on satisfying their basic needs, thus achieving social integration.

Along these lines, the current Government has created the Advisory Council for social policies and combating poverty, which brings together social institutions of the State, civil society organizations, the Catholic Church, farmers' organizations and labour unions. The idea is to establish a powerful alliance for policies and programmes, in the understanding that social development is a concern not only for the governmental bodies but for all those who play a role in Paraguayan society.

Similarly, the methodology of the programmes to combat poverty in emergencies and other urgent situations is based on coordination, participation,

targeting and decentralization. This approach involves transferring State resources and services to the poor rural and urban populations in order to generate synergies between the community and the intermediary organizations, so as to stimulate programmes for advancement and development.

At present 32 per cent of the population is affected by poverty, and the rate of unemployment is 19 per cent. Nonetheless, and in spite of economic limitations, we have made significant progress in the area of social spending, which went from 3 per cent of gross domestic product in 1990 to 8.2 per cent in 1998. The Government's programme has strengthened the process of educational reform, and we have improved the quality of teaching and increased the educational system's coverage, so that now more than 90 per cent of boys and girls are provided basic schooling. Average life expectancy has now reached 69 years, and infant mortality has been reduced to 20 per 1,000 live births, although we recognize that there is a good deal of under-reporting here.

In order to achieve the objectives of accelerated social development, the Government is currently undertaking a State reform so as to increase the efficiency and results of current expenditures. Another objective is to further our policy of economic and commercial openness, allowing for the free play of market forces, while at the same time taking care that changes do not take place in an uncontrolled manner or result in those with the least resources being unfairly burdened. We are seeking to institutionalize the bodies charged with managing the economy and social policies, and, while providing the best guarantees, we are also seeking to privatize Government entities that are experiencing deficits.

As regards fulfilling the commitments and national goals of the World Summit, in sum, the Government strategy is based on the following components. One is the consolidation of a favourable legal and economic environment for social development, with the consensus support of the Government and civil society. Another is a vigorous policy for the control and eradication of extreme poverty and for lowering, in the medium-term, rural poverty and urban marginalization. A third component is the creation of jobs as a firm and real basis for increasing the well-being of the population. A fourth is seeking the basis of an appropriate social-integration policy, in view of the fact that we have a homogeneous population made up of people earning disparate levels of income and that we need to narrow the current income gaps. A fifth component is to increase formal education at the various educational levels — primary, secondary, tertiary and post-graduate — and to institute a training policy to increase production and productivity. A sixth component involves the incorporation of appropriate technologies, especially in rural production, to increase profits in the agricultural sector. A seventh component involves seeking new investments, for which we are counting on international cooperation and the more developed countries.

It is clear that national efforts are not sufficient if we do not have international cooperation that transfers knowledge and technologies and facilitates financing. Above all, the developed countries must accept equitable standards for international trade, opening markets and eliminating subsidies. Any national effort must be accompanied by international solidarity.

We Paraguayans are ready to take immediate and effective action to seek solutions to social problems, because if we do not, we may find ourselves in a vicious circle in which unsatisfied demands create political instability, and this instability in turn leads to a deterioration of the necessary conditions for economic and social development. Therefore, we are facing a great challenge, and we in Paraguay believe that we have to fight to eliminate the obstacles to creating a civil society with social justice, equity and greater well-being for the population.

Finally, as a Member State of the United Nations we look forward to the political, technical, economic and financial outcomes of this special session being reflected in the near future in a greater sense of brotherhood among countries, in a united and joint effort to find ways and resources to create sustainable economic growth and to allow human beings to flourish in an environment of peace, justice and well-being.

The President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Hawa Ahmed Youssouf, Minister-delegate responsible for the Advancement of Women, Family Welfare and Social Affairs of the Office of the Prime Minister of Djibouti.

Mrs. Youssouf (Djibouti) (*spoke in French*): Allow me to begin by warmly thanking the Swiss Government for the cordial welcome. I would also like

to thank the Secretariat for the quality of the organization of this international meeting to follow up on the Copenhagen Summit.

A little more than five years have elapsed since the World Summit for Social Development was held in Copenhagen. Here we are meeting together once again to look at what progress has been made in implementing the commitments we shouldered then. The fact that we are here shows that we want to combat poverty in all its diverse forms and to fight for truly sustainable development.

Undoubtedly, it must be admitted, that the time elapsed has been rather short for implementing the reforms and measures recommended. Nonetheless, I am pleased to note the progress that has been made, even if it is only in increasing awareness of the magnitude of the challenge we face.

We all know that poverty is not inevitable; it is a result of many factors — socio-political, economic and environmental. There is no panacea. But I believe that we must henceforth accord top priority to enhancing our human capital.

Turning now to the situation in my country, the most recent studies conducted there reveal a very worrisome situation. More than 50 per cent of households do not have access to the minimum necessary for subsistence. Furthermore, there are striking contrasts. Relative progress has been made in some fields — basic education, access to drinking water and the advancement of women, for instance — but this is offset by a lack of job openings. Unemployment is about 60 per cent, and the situation is even more serious for young people and, above all, for women.

Unemployment and income insecurity have been shown to be by far the main factors in creating poverty. Nonetheless, obstacles to individual, family and collective well-being are not restricted to employment problems. The need for basic social services is just as acute. The most vulnerable groups have to live with a whole host of handicaps that compromise their very existence.

I believe that this very brief analysis gives the Assembly some idea of the magnitude of our problems. Despite the disappointing results to date, and although it is a little early to measure effectively what has been accomplished since 1995, we remain confident in our chosen path.

Economic growth, no matter how great, cannot in itself reduce poverty unless it increases the sources of income and employment for poor people and broadens access to basic social services. On the basis of this analysis of the sustainable development challenge, Djibouti decided to undertake an in-depth reform in order to address jointly our pressing needs for economic efficiency and to combat poverty.

Since 1996, with the support of development partners, the Government of Djibouti has been carrying out a structural adjustment programme, which includes a significant social component. Thus, despite restrictions on public expenditures, social budgets have been maintained, and, above all, we have been able to avoid massive lay-offs by calling upon worker solidarity.

These measures do not stand in isolation. They are accompanied by major projects entirely devoted to the fight against poverty, such as our Social Fund for Development and ADETIP.

Furthermore, concern for good governance remains a key element in our new policy. Strengthening our analytical capabilities is a major objective, because we know how crucial information and its use are in monitoring the evolution of household living conditions. Thus, a statistical survey was conducted in 1996 and another has been scheduled for the end of this year. This will allow us to better evaluate the evolution of the overall situation of the living standards of the population.

I would like also to mention a few of the legal measures that have been taken. A new family code will soon be adopted, and we have adopted a new penal code and have ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

In institutional terms, the new President of the Republic, His Excellency Mr. Ismaïl Omar Guelleh, upon taking office, established three new social ministries: the Ministry for Employment and National Solidarity, the Ministry of State for the Advancement of Women, Family Well-being and Social Affairs, which is engaged in formulating a strategy to integrate women in the development process; and the Ministry of State for Decentralization and Local Communities.

This demonstrates the political will of the President of the Republic in this connection.

Local situations vary, but it is clear that our efforts will continue to be in vain without democracy and so long as political instability and fratricidal wars continue all over Africa. In the light of those scourges – which in recent times have been particularly severe in the Horn of Africa and whose consequences, including massive refugee flows, have often affected my country and continue to do so – the President of the Republic is sparing no effort to bring about peace between the countries in conflict in that region and to restore civil harmony to other countries that are experiencing internal problems.

Most important and courageous among his initiatives has been the peace plan for Somalia, which he has been pursuing since coming to office. For more than a month, the Republic of Djibouti has been hosting the Conference on reconciliation among the Somali people to help that people overcome the unacceptable situation they have faced for a decade and recover their dignity and their rightful place in the comity of nations. We are seeking to reflect in that contribution our deep conviction that together, in peace and in the richness of our diversity, we can win the fight against poverty.

In the face of the increasing globalization of the economy, which threatens to weaken our countries even further, we must properly assess what is at stake and act accordingly. My country reaffirms its commitment to do all it can to attain the objectives of fighting poverty and achieving lasting human development, which are prerequisites for the achievement of just, prosperous societies.

But all of this requires a greater contribution from the international community through the cancellation of the debt of poor countries and the provision of financing adapted to the needs and individual characteristics of each country.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Peter Magvaši, Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and the Family of Slovakia.

Mr. Magvaši (Slovakia) (*spoke in Russian*): The international campaign for social progress that was launched at the World Summit for Social Development held at Copenhagen in March 1995 has provided great impetus for progress in the Slovak Republic. Commitments resulting from the Copenhagen Declaration have been incorporated in the policy for transforming the social sphere in the Slovak Republic adopted in late 1995 by the Government and the parliament of the Slovak Republic. In transforming the social sphere, we are aiming to create an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that will enable the citizens of the Slovak Republic to achieve social development.

Our principal aim is to create a socially just system of social security based on the personal participation of citizens, social solidarity and State guarantees. Social benefits are provided under the same conditions across the entire territory of the Slovak Republic; no group is excluded. The principle of guaranteeing basic living conditions is applied also to foreigners, stateless persons, refugees, temporarily displaced persons and family members in material need. Besides those social assistance benefits, the following elements are part of our system: social prevention, social counselling, social and legal protections, social services and financial compensation allowances for severe physical or mental disability.

Social prevention plays an important role here. It is not only an integral part of all the forms of social assistance provided by State and non-State entities and by municipalities; through its institutions and activities it is an important component of the system for the prevention of socio-pathological factors throughout society. To make these preventive activities as effective as possible, we emphasize the link between preventive measures involving criminal law and other kinds of preventive measures. National and regional preventive programmes are regularly evaluated and updated.

The Government of the Slovak Republic has committed itself to developing policies and programmes that will secure and extend the participation of women as equal partners in all areas of political, economic, social and cultural life. The key policy document of the Government of the Slovak Republic in the area of women's issues is our 10-year National Action Plan for Women, formulated in 1997.

Since its new Government came to office in 1998, the Slovak Republic has intensified its involvement in the activities of world organizations. Here I should mention our cooperation with the International Labour Organization (ILO), where we have become a titular member of the Governing Body of the International

Labour Office and chaired the government group during the 87th session of the International Labour Conference, held last year. We devote particular attention to ILO conventions and standards and we support ILO declarations that promote the creation of jobs through a variety of activities, and whose implementation promotes full, productive and freely chosen employment. In 1999, my Government adopted its document on employment policy through 2002 with the aim of achieving one of the priorities of our economic and social policy: full employment.

Let me also mention International Labour Organization Convention no. 182, on the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, which in 1999 the Slovak Republic was one of the first countries to ratify. I attach great importance to the fact that the Slovak Republic has ratified all eight core conventions of the ILO. I see this as an undoubted contribution to social cohesion.

The key factors and basic prerequisites for building a cohesive society are trust and participation. Thus, when building a cohesive society we have to focus on formulating strategies and principles that will strengthen trust among citizens and trust in State administration. It is obvious that key conditions for promoting trust are the elimination of economic disparities and the development of respect for cultural differences.

Allow me to conclude by expressing the support of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations. In particular, we support United Nations activities aimed at achieving stability and sustainable growth throughout the world. The Slovak Republic will do its best to implement the conclusions of the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

The President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Matar Humaid Al-Tayer, Minister for Labour and Social Affairs of the United Arab Emirates.

Mr. Al-Tayer (United Arab Emirates) (*spoke in Arabic*): I bring greetings to you, Mr. President, from His Highness Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, President of the United Arab Emirates. I would also like to convey to you the greetings of his brother, His Highness Sheikh Maktoum Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the United Arab Emirates.

Let me also congratulate you, Sir, on your assumption of the presidency of this special session and express the wish that this conference will be most successful. We are very pleased to be participating, along with this elite group of heads of State and heads of Government, in these efforts to achieve the edification of a new world of social development that will ensure prosperity and progress for all peoples of the world.

Let me also thank the Secretary-General and his colleagues for the excellent preparatory work they did for this conference.

This session is being held at the dawn of a new millennium, five years after the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and the commitments undertaken in the area of development. We are endeavouring, along with all States of the world, to achieve a common goal, which is to ensure development for all. Many people have untiringly been carrying out these recommendations at various levels, in spite of the obstacles posed by wars, difficult economic conditions and poverty, which block the road to development and hinder the achievement of the aspirations of peoples. We believe that these are very serious matters on which we must focus our attention if we wish to achieve development and prosperity for all.

Our policies are human-centred, because the human being is at the centre of all development and resources. That is why we have a stable policy. Our country has achieved record progress at all local and regional levels, in particular in the area of regional and international cooperation. We have also been able to strike a balance between economic and social development. In addition, we have been exerting every effort to implement fully the recommendations emanating from, and the commitments undertaken at, Copenhagen in 1995.

We would like to comment briefly on our country's achievements in the field of development. Generally speaking, our economic, social and cultural development over the past few years and the progress achieved have extremely significant. Moreover, our country's economy has grown substantially. For instance, the gross national product reached 181 billion dirhams in 2000, from 170 billion in 1998. This has made increased resources and higher-quality services available for all citizens of the country.

New resources and means have made it necessary for us to take a different, scientific approach. We have had to set up education and training systems that take into account these new developments. In fact, we were one of the first countries to come forward with a document on education strategies that represents our country's vision of the requirements of teaching as we move towards the year 2020. Thus both teaching and training have been very important in ensuring literacy.

One of the priorities of my Government is to increase the matriculation rate in primary schools, which is 96 per cent for boys and 92.5 per cent for girls. Attendance at the secondary-school level has increased to 76 per cent for boys and 84 per cent for girls. Many girls go on to attend universities.

In the area of health services, we have developed an integrated system that makes health care available to all. We have done our utmost to implement World Health Organization directives in order to achieve the objective of health for all. There are 169 hospitals and clinics, with 7,000 hospital beds and one doctor available for each 600 patients, and one nurse for each 300. Life expectancy has reached 76.5 years for women and 73.9 for men. We are among the most advanced countries in the area of life expectancy.

A number of strategies are in place to combat childhood and chronic diseases and safeguard maternal health. The infant mortality rate has dropped to 9.44 deaths per 1,000 live births, and we have also noted a significant drop in mortality at birth.

A great deal has been done in the area of social services. A number of laws have been passed to ensure the social welfare of people, one of which covers more than 30,000 families in the areas most in need. Also, a 1999 law deals with pensions and special grants for all categories of people. Other pieces of legislation deal with special categories: the elderly, the young and the disabled, for instance.

We have put a lot of effort into the area of youth and culture, and accordingly we have established a number of cultural centres for youth. Our country is also concerned about providing marriage grants and financial assistance to young people. Twenty-one thousand young couples have benefited from this assistance, which so far has totalled 1.336 billion dirhams.

We also support sports federations, which have increased in number from three to 27. The number of sporting clubs for young women and girls has increased from eight to 34.

In the area of employment, we have tried to raise national competence levels. We have set up a special body to train managers, and we also host a number of foreigners from many different countries. I can safely say that the labour market is a very good model and example of regional and international cooperation. Foreigners have full protection under Law No. 8 of 1980 and under the various conventions that we have signed.

In our country women enjoy full rights as members of society. They are equal to men in all areas. They have access to higher education, including university education. The number of female students is greater than the number of male students at all educational levels. Women participate in social work. Their rate of participation in the labour market has increased. About 20 per cent of posts in the federation of ministries are held by women; 14.7 per cent of teaching positions are held by women; and 56.1 per cent of posts in the medical, pharmaceutical and teaching sectors are held by women.

Women have employment benefits. They receive the same level of salary as men. They are also promoted to high-ranking positions. Many social activities are also available to women, and 17,000 women and children benefit from them. There are women's associations, for example, in the fields of scouting and counselling, making services available to women.

While we are aware of the importance of achieving sustainable development, and of our duty to guarantee economic and social rights for all citizens of our country, we are also aware that a number of developing countries are experiencing a lack of resources. In that respect, we have assumed our international responsibility and have participated in the economic and social development of those countries, thanks to material and in-kind assistance which we are providing through national and regional institutions or, in some cases, directly. This assistance is given on the basis of favourable concessionary conditions, and we have cancelled the debt and interest on debt of certain developing countries that are overburdened by debt.

We are trying to make as much progress as possible in order to optimally implement the 1995 Copenhagen recommendations. Despite our effort to assess everything that has been done over the last five years, we feel we must continue to move towards the priority objective, which is the achievement of social development for everyone within the context of globalization. It is therefore very important to stress the implementation of the Copenhagen Programme of Action, while at the same time doing our utmost to assist United Nations institutions. We wish all participants the greatest success.

The President: I call on Her Excellency Ms. Ethel Blondin-Andrew, Secretary of State for Children and Youth of Canada.

Ms. Blondin-Andrew (Canada): Five years ago I had the privilege of attending the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen, where our nations pledged to work together to improve the social well-being of the world's citizens. We committed ourselves to an ambitious programme of action to eradicate poverty, increase productive employment and ensure greater social integration and inclusion.

Today, I again feel privileged to attend this special session to assess together how we have measured up against the commitments and challenges of Copenhagen and what more we can do to realize our common objective: social development for all in a globalizing world.

I would like to reflect on what has happened in those five years — both nationally and internationally — as we come to understand better the challenges and opportunities of globalization.

The context for social development has changed since 1995. There have been unprecedented advances in technologies, information and communications. The roles of the public and private sectors have evolved in managing national economies. The public sector has been shrinking, its resources diminished. World trade has dramatically increased as trade borders and barriers have disappeared through regional trade agreements and electronic commerce. Civil society is playing a more active role in shaping Government responses and policies.

But increased economic growth has not automatically translated into equitable distribution of benefits, within countries and between countries. In some cases globalization has exacerbated the marginalization of disadvantaged groups. And there is a growing sense of insecurity, as the already disadvantaged see uncertainty in their future potential to take full, productive part in the new economy and to profit from its advantages.

No country is spared the discipline, and none is denied the benefits. In Canada, in the past decade, we have had to make difficult adjustments. We are a trading nation. But our commodity-based economy no longer generates the wealth we need to provide the high standard of social well-being that Canadians expect their Governments to foster. Canada has had to free resources to invest in the new knowledge and information economy and introduce strict fiscal measures during the transition in order to restore the economy to good health. We have had to retool government involvement in social development, adjusting its role as direct provider of services. We also had to provide for those whose lifetime employment in traditional jobs had suddenly disappeared.

How did we respond? First of all, we carefully analysed the issues: the investment needed to adjust our economy to globalization; the dangers of polarization between communities and groups; the risks of further marginalization of vulnerable and disadvantaged members of our society; environmental protection; and social fragmentation and exclusion.

Next, we looked at our strengths. Canadians have a profound attachment to the social values that unite and define our nation. We share a common vision of a society in which every citizen, regardless of race, gender, age, ability or wealth, enjoys the opportunity to fully participate in the economic, social and civic life of the nation. Our quest is for a society in which prosperity is not limited to a few, but is shared by — and is the responsibility of — many, a society where citizens can enjoy the highest quality of life.

In the words of Canada's Prime Minister, Jean Chrétien:

> "The success we have achieved as a nation has come not only from strong growth, but from an abiding commitment to strong values — caring, compassion, an insistence that there be an equitable sharing of benefits of economic growth."

We recognized the unprecedented opportunities before us, the potential of new technologies, enhanced trade and investments, new partnerships and the global flow of information and knowledge that enable countries to meet the new challenges.

We worked together. With our provincial and territorial partners we defined a new approach to social policy based on shared values and objectives and the active participation of other actors. We renewed our active commitment to engage civil society in the development and delivery of programmes and services. We benefited by recognizing the contribution the private sector can play in the efficient delivery of some services.

We are proud of our achievements. Our economy has strengthened. Our unemployment rate has significantly decreased. In the last few years, Canada has ranked first on the United Nations Development Programme development index for measuring the quality of life. Our national experience has set the stage for continued sustainable economic growth that encompasses Canadian ideals of social justice, good governance, equity, the protection of vulnerable groups and the protection of the environment. The approach is based on the following principles: commitment to peace, order and good government, with respect for human rights for all citizens; a multicultural nation State; investment in children and youth, our leaders for the twenty-first century; stronger basic social services, in particular health care; skills and knowledge, and lifelong learning, as keys to economic security in a global economy; environmental protection; stronger communities through partnerships with all members of civil society; and special measures to strengthen the inclusion of aboriginal peoples, ethnic minorities, people with disabilities, women, youth and the elderly.

Canada is part of the international community, and that community is now struggling with similar issues, as together at this special session we define the way forward to achieve social development for all in a globalizing world.

We know the issues: rapid technological change and increased world trade that create opportunities, but also pose risks such as increasing disparities and marginalization between rich and poorer countries; environmental pressures; growing unemployment and new health challenges. Here I would mention in particular the scourge of HIV/AIDS, which has wiped out the gains of two decades of development in a number of developing countries, particularly in Africa.

We know the questions — and I believe we also know some of the answers. First, we need a common framework for international action based on shared goals and values, including equity, respect for basic rights, inclusion, protection of vulnerable groups and environmental sustainability. The programme of action that we will adopt at this special session provides us with this framework.

Next, we need to adapt our international institutions and systems to implement this programme of action. Our experience in the past five years has shown that we will achieve neither sustainable economic development nor sustainable social development without integrating the two. A multilateral system in which economic, social and financial institutions work independently is no longer viable. We need to develop a culture of partnership among the United Nations, the specialized agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Without this the agencies will fail to realize their own mandates, and the multilateral system will fail its member States.

It is fitting that this special session take place in Geneva, home to the agencies of technical expertise and practical action in social and economic development — employment and respect for workers' rights at the International Labour Organization (ILO), health at the World Health Organization (WHO), communications technologies at the International Telecommunication Union and trade at the WTO. We salute in particular the vision and commitment to coherence and partnership that is so prominent in the leadership of the new Directors-General at the ILO and WHO. This is the way forward for the specific institutions and for the international system as a whole.

In the absence of the President, Mr. Jayanana (Thailand), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The truth is spreading that we must all work together. History and necessity have opened Canada to the world. Recognizing that no nation can prosper and advance in disregard of others, we are committed to multilateralism. We believe in the power of partnerships and in our collective capacity to shape the future. We will sustain our active participation in international, regional and cultural forums to promote Canadian values of social justice and inclusion.

I close with a pledge that we Canadians will sustain our commitment to multilateral action in order to respect our human dignity and give concrete expression to the value we place in social justice and action, so as to bring closer the day when we achieve social development for all in a globalizing world.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mohamed Ould Nany, Minister for Economic Affairs and Development of Mauritania.

Mr. Ould Nany (Mauritania) (*spoke in Arabic*): Allow me to begin by congratulating the President on his election to chair this twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly.

This special session, as we know, is devoted to assessing the results achieved since the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen in 1995. At that Summit, world leaders adopted 10 commitments of great significance to all mankind. The leaders committed themselves to preparing an economic, political, social, cultural and legal environment that would favour social development. They also committed themselves to developing effective programmes for fighting poverty and for guaranteeing employment and social integration. They committed themselves to finding appropriate long-term solutions to the debt problem, especially the debt burden borne by African countries.

Five years have passed since the Copenhagen meeting. We are here now to look at what has been achieved and at the prospects for the future. We are also here to work together for sustainable comprehensive global social development, in line with the aspirations of people throughout the world.

My country has been able to make great progress towards democracy by committing itself to the rule of law and by guaranteeing individual and collective freedoms, particularly in the health and education sectors and the labour market. Despite the enormous challenges faced by Mauritania today — and, indeed, similar challenges are being faced by other developing countries whose resources are limited — we have over the past five years made considerable efforts to bring about social development. Thirty-seven per cent of our public expenditure has been devoted to social issues. This is, in fact, twice the level that was recommended at the Copenhagen Summit.

This level of investment has allowed us to increase the number of children in school. Five years ago only 76 per cent of school-age children in Mauritania were in school, and now 90 per cent of them are. We have also been able to reduce inequalities between boys and girls. Today, 83 per cent of girls in Mauritania attend school. As for the fight against illiteracy, we have been able to provide adult literacy classes, and we have also been able to reduce the number of illiterate people in Mauritania by one third.

Turning to the health sector, we have pursued the policy that we defined in 1992. We have stressed prevention and access to health-care services and also the need to make medicines available at affordable prices that correspond to the citizens' buying power. In 1994, 63 per cent of the population enjoyed medical coverage. We were able to increase that figure to 75 per cent in 1998. We have also managed to increase the percentage of people who have access to clean drinking water. Here again a great deal has been done.

As for the on gender issue, we have been able to improve the participation of women in our country's economy. Here of course we are looking towards general development of the family as well as the need to protect women. Women are now allowed to participate in all aspects of economic, political and social life in the country.

Efforts to eradicate poverty remain a priority for my Government. We have achieved significant results thanks to various programmes. We have a programme, for instance, intended to improve social services. This covers the health and education sectors. We have also tried to improve income-generating activities and to ensure that we appropriately tackle labour-intensive activities. It is our hope that by the year 2015 we will have reduced the number of citizens living below the poverty line, achieving a figure of only 12 per cent by 2015. We hope to do this by improving the competitiveness of our national economy, by improving social services, by fostering balanced economic growth and by ensuring that we are able to reclaim a large amount of land within our country.

We hope that the approach we have taken, the strategy we have outlined, will enable us to achieve the results I have just sketched out. We believe, therefore, that we should rebalance the country's economy, effect a drop in inflation and achieve real economic growth in Mauritania. We very much hope that our country will

be one of the first to benefit from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, from which we are expecting a great deal.

The world today is facing enormous challenges. There is the problem of the technological gap, the divide between rich and poor countries and the fact that least developed countries are increasingly marginalized. A lack of foreign investment and financial flows to developing countries means that those countries are not able to gain access to developed countries' markets. The developing countries also face problems of trade imbalances and trade deficits. All of these problems constitute a whole series of obstacles relating to the participation of developing countries in global markets.

Globalization of course offers enormous opportunities. We can make it a driving force for growth, for the integration of developing countries into the world economy. We can do this if we want to, and we can ensure a better and just distribution of the wealth of this world and of the fruits of work done all over the world.

The Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt (HIPC) Initiative is certainly a step in the right direction. I think that it is a very good starting point for development, with the proviso that it must not be used in such a way as to run counter to the need to increase official development assistance. Indeed, official development assistance is continuing to dwindle, and the HIPC Initiative must not be used as a pretext for cutting it still further.

It is important that all the peoples of the world be allowed to benefit from the wealth and resources of the world. It is our duty to ensure that, thanks to a spirit of solidarity and firm convictions, we can meet the challenges we face and step confidently into the future, in accordance with the commitments undertaken at Copenhagen.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Juan Carlos Aparicio, Minister for Labour and Social Affairs of Spain.

Mr. Aparicio (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am pleased to speak on behalf of Spain at this special session of the General Assembly on social development and to share with all present what we have done to translate into reality the ideals enshrined five years ago at Copenhagen.

In 1995 we laid the foundation for social development. In the intervening years we have made progress, but significant areas of poverty and social exclusion remain to be dealt with. The European Union is aware of this reality, and at the Lisbon summit important progress was made in the combat against poverty and exclusion.

Globalization must go hand in hand with solidarity, and Spain would like to share with the Assembly its modest contribution to the progress achieved in the past years.

In the area of social integration, two significant demographic phenomena are posing major challenges to Spanish society. On the one hand, the gradual ageing of the national population has exacerbated problems related to the dependent status of elderly persons. Awareness of this dependence is becoming a key concept in policies aimed at the elderly and the disabled.

The Government of Spain would like to become a catalyst in the promotion of a wide-ranging national and international debate on ageing and its socio-economic consequences within the framework of preparations for the second world conference on ageing, to be held at Madrid in the year 2002.

Furthermore, the rapid increase in the immigrant population in recent years has made it necessary to create a special framework for protecting these people and ensuring that their rights are respected. The promotion of the value of intercultural coexistence in Spanish society requires priority attention.

In the area of gender equality, a great deal of progress has been made in the past few years. We welcome these achievements, which help chart the course to be taken in keeping with the commitments and objectives set out at the special session to review the outcome of the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in New York from 5 to 9 June last, and in accordance with the policies of the European Union in this respect.

Spain has reaffirmed its commitment with regard to equality at the national level, at the level of the autonomous regions and at the local level, in keeping with the territorial organization of the Spanish State.

In the area of employment, legal measures have been taken to combat women's unemployment, their vertical and horizontal segregation, the short-term

nature of their contracts and the difficulties they face in juggling family and work, as well as to create more and better jobs.

Although clear progress has been achieved, certain aspects still need to be addressed, inter alia, access by women to high-level and decision-making posts. Even though the participation of women has gradually increased, there remains a clear qualitative and quantitative imbalance in the participation of women in all sectors of social life.

In the political arena, women are holding increasingly responsible posts. For example, in the National Parliament, women's participation rate is 26 per cent in the Senate and 28 per cent in the Congress of Deputies. The rate is 34 per cent in the European Parliament — higher than the European Parliament average of about 30 per cent. Thus in terms of political participation by women Spain ranks eighth among the 15 countries of the European Union and the 12 countries of the Council of Europe.

Violence against women is receiving particular attention from the Government, and we have redoubled our efforts to eradicate it. We have approved a plan aimed at dealing with this phenomenon. It sets out a number of objectives and measures to eradicate domestic violence and to make available the necessary social resources to assist women who have been the victims of these acts of violence, with an investment of about $70 million.

Education continues to be a fundamentally important tool for the advancement of women. In this respect, we have made a special effort to train women in fields such as technology and science.

All of these actions show clearly that Spain is implementing the new initiatives proposed in the outcome document of the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly on "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century", and that it is following the guidelines of the European Union.

I should like also to refer briefly to the importance of health and development. This special session provides us an excellent opportunity to reiterate the commitments of the Copenhagen Summit and to move towards a multidimensional view of human development by strengthening its social components, especially those relating to health. In this respect, let me stress the importance of ensuring the provision of health services to women and girls, including for sexual and reproductive health.

In Spain health coverage is universal and public. We have, within the framework of the National Health Service, a protocol for sexual health and family planning, approved by all territorial administrations. In addition, the national plan for the prevention of domestic violence, which I referred to earlier, includes a special health protocol.

Lastly, I wish to refer to the activities of the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation in the field of social development, which have increased significantly since 1995.

Ninety-two projects are under way in the framework of Spanish bilateral cooperation. These benefit the most vulnerable sectors of the population and represent a mobilization of financial resources of around 1.8 million Spanish pesetas.

In addition, subsidies are allocated to projects presented and carried out by the Spanish non-governmental organizations. By their very nature, these projects support social development, as they relate to health, education, work, labour, elimination of social marginalization and so on, but it is practically impossible to quantify the specific contribution made to each of those sectors. However, it is noteworthy that in 1999, total subsidies to non-governmental organizations for the implementation of projects in the field of social development exceeded 13.4 million Spanish pesetas.

At the multilateral level, Spain continues to cooperate in the implementation of a number of projects, including the one aimed at eradicating child labour in Latin America, which is being carried out by the International Labour Organization.

In conclusion, let me reiterate Spain's commitment to these ideals. The time has come to translate them into reality, so let us all work towards that goal.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mr. Miha Brejc, Minister for Labour, Family and Social Affairs of Slovenia.

Mr. Brejc (Slovenia): Allow me to express my gratitude for the preparatory work that was done for this special session of the General Assembly, which is

of pivotal importance for exchanging views on experiences, on examples of good practices and, not least, on the obstacles encountered in our respective countries in addressing the issues of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

Slovenia fully aligns itself with the statement made by the Minister of Labour and Solidarity of Portugal on behalf of the European Union.

The Government of Slovenia wishes to extend its firm support for the objectives encompassed in the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action, and to underline the importance of assessing, as a follow-up to the guidelines outlined in Copenhagen in 1995, the accomplishments made and, of course, of finding the most appropriate ways to further implement the initiatives. However, as the aforementioned issues represent composite and interwoven topics, it has to be emphasized that we can tackle them only by recognizing their complexity and must act accordingly, at both national and international levels.

At the beginning of the 1990s, the transition towards a market economy in Slovenia and the subsequent loss of certain markets brought about temporary negative trends of economic growth and, as a result, a marked increase in unemployment. Since 1993 we have been witnessing a revival of economic growth and a substantial improvement in the living standards of most of the Slovene population. In 1999 the economic growth of Slovenia was one of the greatest in Europe. However, we are aware that general economic and social development does per se not imply an improved situation for everyone. The prevention of poverty and of related social exclusion is therefore a fundamental objective of social policy in Slovenia.

In the areas which contribute to a great extent to the alleviation of social exclusion — namely, the policies of education, employment, health, housing, social assistance and services — numerous programmes have already been or are currently being developed. Irrespective of that, the Government of Slovenia is of the opinion that an integral national strategy is required; hence, it adopted a special programme on the fight against poverty and social exclusion at the beginning of this year.

The main goal of this programme and a general objective of our Government is to overcome a multidimensional problem, which poverty and social exclusion undoubtedly are, by employing appropriate interconnection, harmonization and expansion of the existing measures and programmes. The programme, along with numerous others adopted in recent years, addresses the issues of employability with a specific emphasis on vulnerable groups, and it underlines the importance of education for all categories of the population.

We wish to emphasize that there is an urgent need for measures to rectify the current situation concerning social exclusion both in a national and in a global context. Therefore, it is believed to be important to reduce poverty and social exclusion by means of permanent activities and actions, thus preventing the long-term exclusion of individuals and their families. Such action, in order to be successful, requires the concerted efforts of the international governmental organizations, Governments, local communities, public services and non-governmental organizations.

The modern world is increasingly characterized by the extensive welfare of some people, on one hand, which is, regrettably, accompanied by the silent poverty of growing numbers of people, on the other. The Government of Slovenia believes this obvious dichotomy is becoming unacceptable and urgently requires correction. In spite of improvements in several specific areas of social and economic development, the spread of pluralism and democratic institutions and the observance of fundamental human rights, the world is, more than ever, faced with a growing number of people, predominantly women and youth, who are afflicted by hunger and other deprivations.

The increasing internal social problems in individual countries threaten the well-being of their inhabitants, exerting a negative impact on the quality of life in general. In numerous rich and developing countries the gap between the rich and the poor is widening, as is the gap between the most and the least developed countries.

The Government of Slovenia applauds the fact that the world community is becoming conscious that, along with global changes in the world economy, the fundamental parameters of social development in all countries should also be changed. Social and economic policies need to be in conformity, as the interests of the population have to be mirrored in the interests of the State. It has been ascertained that poverty and

unemployment often result in isolation, marginalization and violence. Even more, poverty has been found to offer fertile ground for massive infringements of human rights in the world.

Therefore, I wish to express the readiness of the Government of Slovenia to cooperate at the international level in a concerted effort to erase absolute poverty in the world, and I underline that our goal is to create a society for everybody in which every individual plays an active part.

The President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Nicolae Tabacaru, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Moldova.

Mr. Tabacaru (Republic of Moldova): I am pleased to address this special session, and I take this opportunity to thank the United Nations and the Swiss authorities for offering excellent conditions for our work.

Since the Copenhagen Summit, globalization has presented new challenges for the fulfilment of the commitments made in 1995, such as the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full employment, social integrity and guaranteeing social services for all. However, achieving the goals of the Programme of Action adopted in the framework of the World Summit for Social Development represents a problem for many nations.

Besides being a great opportunity for the economic and social development of all countries, the globalization process also brings a real danger of increasing inequality between them. It is a well-known fact that the small economies in transition are extremely vulnerable to the current social and economic challenges. The delay of positive processes in the economies of these countries has caused the worsening of the social situation of their populations.

The eradication of poverty heads the list of the major problems that many countries, including Moldova, are facing at the moment.

The Republic of Moldova makes considerable efforts to resolve these problems, but the country was seriously affected by the traumas of transition, which caused huge disturbances of an economic, political and social character. The transition from a planning economy to the market economy needs not only a radical change in the mentality of the population, which is used to different types of social guarantees provided by the Government, but also large budget expenditures. During recent years, dozens of categories of beneficiaries of State social guarantees have lost this kind of assistance. In the case of Moldova, the situation is even worse, given the fact that we inherited a population that had a large number of retired people.

The rate of unemployment, which increased considerably during the past decade, became an unavoidable obstacle to democratic reforms. Unfortunately, many Moldovans have learned their first lessons about transition to the market economy by losing their jobs. Believe me, it is not the best way to learn.

Of course, we do our best to cope with the situation, but we consider that the international community should largely support national efforts. The countries with economies in transition, among which is the Republic of Moldova, need financial assistance from international organizations and funds to realize the goals of social development and transition to a market-based economy. These countries' cooperation with such international organizations as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other multilateral bodies working on social development issues, is essential if they are to strengthen social integration and social protection. The Government is undertaking measures to rebuild the social sector, which serves as the foundation for the national strategy of poverty alleviation.

Despite the fact that countries like Moldova are engaged in rather intensive multilateral cooperation with international organizations, the results in the sphere of social development and in living standards remain insufficient, so humanitarian assistance from the international community should become an important additional tool. In this regard, my country actively supports the intensification of coordination in this field and welcomes initiatives like the Fribourg process. As Moldova is now facing an unprecedented drought, which, according to the estimates, will greatly affect the national economy and the social sector, it goes without saying that such initiatives are extremely helpful in dealing with natural disasters and their social impact.

We believe that social assistance has to be promoted as a State social policy and administered by a central specialized structure in close cooperation with non-governmental charity organizations and

associations, foundations and individuals. The reform of the social assistance system includes such objectives as the analysis and evaluation of the social and economic phenomena that are causing the demand for social assistance; setting up the legal conditions for the granting and administering of help; identifying and stimulating social and professional activities in order to meet the requirements of people and families who are exposed to risk, the potential social-assistance clients; and training and improving the professional capacities of the staff involved in granting social assistance. The programmes elaborated by the Government have been developed in close cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations.

Returning to our current work, I should mention that our State highly appreciates the political declaration prepared by the Preparatory Committee of this special session, which invites Governments, the United Nations and other relevant international organizations to strengthen within their respective mandates the quality and consistency of their support for sustainable development in countries with economies in transition.

The ultimate goal of social development is to improve and enhance the quality of life of all people. This requires an opportunity for each member of a society to exercise his or her right and responsibility to take an active part in the affairs of the community. Only together can we achieve sustainable growth on a global scale — growth that would promote equity, social justice, tolerance and responsibility.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. A. Abdullah, Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs of Afghanistan.

Mr. Abdullah (Afghanistan): Scores of nations and thousands of millions of people throughout the world would like to hope that the title of this special session of the General Assembly will one day become a reality in their everyday lives. Today, however, we must admit that for them, globalization means marginalization and the worsening of their social conditions. The gap between rich and poor is developing into a gulf at the international as well as the national level.

I shall not quote figures that are known to all, but more and more people are becoming trapped by poverty, sickness and illiteracy. For them, the concept of a "global village" is a pipe dream. The development of globalization is irreversible; but as it develops, it brings with it a greater degree of marginalization. Humankind cannot and must not bow to the law of the market alone; politics cannot abandon the field. A number of the conflicts raging in the world today are sustained, if not actually stimulated, by economic and financial interests offering immediate gain, whereas a prerequisite for lasting development is stability.

We need rules. If the trend towards marginalization is not checked, the world will be faced with unforeseeable upheavals. If that trend continues, it will foster the emergence of fanatical and extremist forces that will not provide a solution to the problems of poverty, but instead be a threat to international stability and security.

Social development cannot be achieved in isolation. It has to be envisaged in a global framework of economic, cultural and political development. The two essential pillars that sustain the whole structure are health and education for all. Women have a preponderant role to play. The primary precondition for the achievement of the social development aims that the international community set itself in Copenhagen five years ago is the existence of a favourable environment.

We consider that the necessary action to that end must be organized at three levels at the national level, the essential framework is one of respect for the renewed will of the people, respect for human rights, the participation of civil society and good governance: in short, a democratic framework and a voluntarist policy favouring women, girls and the most vulnerable groups. At the regional level, the regional environment implies respect for the sovereignty of States and non-interference in the internal affairs of States. These are the essential preconditions for regional cooperation and economic complementarities to be taken into account. At the international level, the rich countries need to honour their commitments to the developing countries, in particular to the least developed countries. This effort should include matters relating to debt, and the policies and programmes of international financial institutions should take into account considerations of social development.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan actively participated in the World Summit for Social Development, held in Copenhagen from 6 to 12 March 1995, and started the implementation of its national

programme of action by using all possible means. Unfortunately, at the same time, March 1995, the Taliban mercenaries attacked Kabul, the capital, and continued their military campaign until they succeeded in invading the capital in September 1996.

A good number of the 10 commitments made by the Summit members became objects of the attention of the Islamic State of Afghanistan in 1995. The unfortunate course of events — the September 1996 invasion of Kabul by the Taliban, and subsequent tragedies — introduced major obstacles that prevented the implementation of the Copenhagen commitments. One of the tragic consequences of the Taliban military occupation was the complete shutting down of all girls schools and high schools in the occupied areas of the country. Girls were absolutely prevented from attending universities and technical schools.

Girls and women were forbidden to leave their houses, even though in Kabul and most occupied cities, women widowed in earlier wars had been working and were breadwinners, supporting their children. Restrictive measures also were taken to bar access by women and girls to health-related services.

In general, the educational level of the male population has also declined in the past five years. The Taliban mercenaries have not provided any budgetary allocation for the most elementary research institutions or technical centres. This state of social and cultural decrepitude is the result of military occupation. The Taliban is not interested in taking any measures for the eradication of poverty; its main objective is to subjugate Afghans by military means and conquer all the country.

In the areas controlled by the Government, the educational system functions normally for boys and girls. Girls' schools are open, and the female staff members of the Ministry of Education are continuing to do their jobs. Hospitals and health centres are open to both women and men.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan, despite its scarce resources, continues to assist the people in tackling their problems. It is noteworthy that the foreign-imposed conflict in Afghanistan has had negative effects on the areas controlled by the Government as well.

The Islamic State of Afghanistan is expecting the full implementation of General Assembly and Security Council resolutions on Afghanistan, including those parts of the resolutions which refer to emergency international assistance for peace, normalcy, reconstruction and rehabilitation of war-stricken Afghanistan.

In conclusion, I am launching an appeal to the international community and to concerned international relief agencies, including non-governmental organizations, to start or enhance their assistance for the purpose of the social development of the entire population of Afghanistan.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Byron Ismar Morales López, Under-Secretary for Planning and Public Investment, Secretariat of Planning and Programming of the Presidency of Guatemala.

Mr. Morales López (Guatemala) (*spoke in Spanish*): It is an honour for me to participate in this summit, at which we will be able to share the various experiences of our countries in the social field. I will briefly describe the social context of my country, including the advances made in fulfilling the Copenhagen commitments and the main problems that remain. In this context, I will outline the principal features of the new Government's social policy, which were recently presented by President Alfonso Portillo Cabrera.

The population of my country is mostly young and predominantly rural. Slightly more than half of the Guatemalan population consists of 22 linguistic communities that share socio-cultural traits inherited from their Mayan ancestors. These indigenous groups were the principal victims of the armed conflict that for 36 years ravaged the country, killing and injuring thousands and leaving in its wake large numbers of widows, orphans and displaced persons, as well as incalculable material losses.

Fortunately, that conflict was brought to an end by the conclusion of the 1996 Peace Accords. The commitments embodied in those Accords coincide to a large extent with what was agreed at Copenhagen five years ago, as regards both the intentions of the drafters and the actions provided for. Their main objectives include the strengthening of the democratic State, with full enjoyment of individual rights, respect for the identity of indigenous peoples, the overcoming of marginalization and exclusion, and a dynamic and sustained development.

The assessment by the United Nations Verification Mission in Guatemala of the progress made so far in the process of implementation of the Agreements shows substantial advances in some areas and setbacks and stagnation in others. There have no doubt been significant strides in various sectors of social policy, but it has not yet been possible to extend the benefits to the entire population. Similarly, important achievements have been registered in the area of human rights and the improvement of the justice system, even though some problems remain. It is in the economic area that the greatest limitations exist, particularly with respect to increasing the tax burden and increasing the country's productivity.

On 14 January 2000 the Government of President Alfonso Portillo Cabrera took office following democratic elections in which a record number of voters participated. The basic proposals made by the new chief executive include the implementation of the Peace Accords. His priorities also include the fulfilment of international commitments, the defence and promotion of the democratic rule of law, the reduction of poverty, the promotion of sustainable development, an increase in the scope and quality of services to the population, gender equality, the realization of the right of women to reproductive health, decentralization of the State, greater participation by the citizenry, and respect for the identity and rights of indigenous peoples.

In order to accomplish these objectives, a proposal was presented for the conclusion of a covenant on democratic governance based on the Peace Accords and on the consensus and participation of all sectors of the population, with the aim of reducing poverty and achieving joint participation in national development poverty.

Mention should also be made of another key development, namely the recent conclusion of a fiscal agreement between the Government, private enterprise and civil society. Through this historic undertaking, Guatemalan society will promote, by every possible means, the highest possible degree of financial cooperation, through the tax system and by improving tax collection, in order to obtain the resources required to finance a social development process benefiting the widest segments of society.

As I have pointed out, advances have been made as regards the fulfilment of the commitments entered into by Guatemala at the World Summit for Social Development. I should like to give the following examples.

After decades of institutionalized violations of fundamental human rights, the country is heading towards a consolidation of the democratic rule of law and respect for human rights. In addition, major projects to promote the development of indigenous peoples have been financed. In 1999, the Land Fund Law was enacted, whose goal is to facilitate access by rural inhabitants to that resource.

As regards the situation of women, since the signing of the Peace Accords concrete commitments have been undertaken, with particular emphasis on indigenous women. As part of these commitments, a National Women's Forum was established, and, more recently, the Secretariat for Women, a body created to supervise public policy on the advancement of Guatemalan women.

In the area of social expenditures, the percentage of the gross domestic product set aside for expenses in education and health was more than 50 per cent higher in 1999 than in 1995. Illiteracy was reduced by 5 per cent between 1990 and 1999. Despite this positive trend, high levels persist, mainly in the rural areas and among the indigenous population and women. Thus, one of the Government's main commitments is to reduce illiteracy by at least 50 per cent before 2004.

The net rate of student enrolment in primary education increased by 12.5 per cent between 1995 and 1999. This increased coverage was possible because of greater community participation throughout the territory.

In the area of health, the population's access to basic health care rose by about 20 per cent between 1995 and 1999. Infant mortality dropped from 51 to 45 per 1,000 live births. The new health policy seeks to optimize the budget, extend coverage and improve the quality of services and decentralize them, placing greater emphasis on preventive health care.

In conclusion, it is clear that despite the prevailing problems, Guatemala has achieved progress in the social arena and in fulfilling the Peace Agreements. We reiterate our determination to pursue all efforts necessary to consolidate the comprehensive human development of Guatemalans and to promote sustainable social development in the world, as agreed

in Copenhagen and to be agreed at this meeting. We hope that this gathering will provide a good opportunity for strengthening our ties of cooperation so that we will be joined in common efforts to raise the level of well-being of our peoples and of the relations between States within a framework of justice and equity.

The Acting President: I call on Her Excellency Mrs. Bárbara Canedo Patiño, Minister Counsellor and General Director of Multilateral Affairs of Bolivia.

Mrs. Patiño (Bolivia) (*spoke in Spanish*): One of the basic aspects of the World Summit for Social Development, held in 1995, was the acknowledgement by States that social improvement should be an integral part of development strategies at the national and international levels and that the individual should be the subject and the object of this development.

Governments and international organizations have responded in various ways to the 10 commitments and to the Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development, agreed at Copenhagen; five years after that meeting, the study and assessment of the results reveal that many new policies and national programmes have been initiated at the international level. We have come together here to reaffirm and renew our commitment to the objectives established at the Summit.

In this context, the Government of Bolivia has carried out a review of State policies implemented over the last few years. The main national objectives that have been consensually agreed in the national dialogue, "Bolivia towards the twenty-first century", are oriented around four main pillars: opportunity, dignity, justice and institutionality, and equity. These clearly form the conceptual theoretical basis of the Government's plan known as "Commitment for Bolivia", which is being driven ahead by the Government of the President of the Republic, Mr. Hugo Banzer Suárez.

Within the framework of these four pillars, the main challenge faced by my country is reducing poverty and social inequality, eliminating social, cultural, ethnic and gender exclusion to create real equality of opportunity, thus improving the distribution of income.

The Government of Bolivia is aware that the fight against poverty requires public policies that are aimed at achieving better ways of distributing goods and at offering to the groups excluded from the economic process effective measures to change their situation. For that reason, I wish to take this opportunity to describe some advances and obstacles that have been identified in my country in the area of social development.

In the area of justice and human rights, the reform of the State's political Constitution regulates major institutions, such as the Constitutional Court, the Council of the Judiciary and the Ombudsman.

The law on popular participation has given new content and vigour to Bolivia's communities, making them the main level of decision-making and of implementation of the country's decentralization process. The law establishes a regime of economic and financial resources at the district level that makes it possible to strengthen the efficiency of public administration.

Regarding the economic situation resulting from the structural reforms initiated in Bolivia in 1985, it must be pointed out that these reforms are based on liberalization of the economy, openness to other countries, disciplined fiscal policy and a monetary policy aimed at maintaining stable prices and exchange rates. Moreover, in order to stimulate private investment, internal guidelines and norms have been improved, creating laws that increase the flow of national and foreign investments.

Significant progress has been made in my country in the social arena. We have been able to develop a legal environment aimed at increasing citizen participation. Among the main laws are the law on educational reform within the framework of sustainable human development — which covers social, economic, political and cultural aspects — intended to promote people's growth as individuals and members of society.

Article 171 of the State's political Constitution and the law on popular participation recognize the right of indigenous peoples to exercise self-government and self-administration.

Work for equality and equity among the women and men of Bolivia is part of the national Government's public policies. A significant achievement has been the development of specific laws and instruments to make these policies operational. For example, we have the law on parties, the Electoral Code, the law on quotas, the law against domestic and

family violence, the decree on equal opportunity for men and women, draft laws against sexual harassment and on domestic workers and the institutionalization of policies on food safety, human settlements for rural development, support for strengthening the productive infrastructure of services and organizational reinforcement.

However, despite our efforts, we still face obstacles worsened by international financial crises that restrict our capacity to confront problems of poverty and marginalization.

The Government of Bolivia considers that the fight against poverty should be aimed not only at avoiding and overcoming social injustice and inequality, but also at substantially improving the quality of the human resources required to stimulate economic development.

Finally, the challenge of eradicating poverty must be an obligation of both rich and poor countries; it is up to all of us.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency Mr. Kakima Ntambi, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development of Uganda.

Mr. Ntambi (Uganda): My delegation and I cherish the opportunity to add Uganda's voice to those of the previous speakers in congratulating the President on his election to the Presidency of the current General Assembly special session. I also express appreciation to the host Government of Switzerland for the welcome and the warm hospitality that has been accorded to all of us since our arrival here in Geneva. The Uganda delegation also expresses appreciation to the leadership of the United Nations system for the invaluable contributions and the role it continues to play in furtherance of the positive social developments and changes within and among nations.

The Copenhagen Summit recognized that social, economic and technological advancement was important for our countries. However, this position, though welcome and noteworthy, was not new. What was distinctively new and significant was that the Summit participants went further, to agree that any development must be for the benefit of the human person. The Summit participants overwhelmingly agreed that people must be placed at the very centre of the development for which they ought to be and are, indeed, ultimately the sole purpose.

That global understanding — a remarkably unique and historic consensus — led to the adoption of wide-ranging commitments, the implementation of which would fundamentally transform our societies. This transformation would lead to renewed and dynamic societies within which there would be more respect for people and less social and economic inequalities.

As the Assembly is aware, Uganda actively participated in the Copenhagen Summit, and subsequently subscribed fully to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action for social development. We consequently undertook to implement the commitments contained in the Declaration. We committed ourselves to put in place measures that would reduce mass poverty by reducing radically the percentage of the population living in absolute poverty. We promised to increase basic social services in the areas of primary education, primary health care and the provision of safe and clean water to our people.

This session was convened to review the progress of implementation of that Declaration. Uganda is therefore pleased to be participating in this meeting in order to give an account and to share experiences with other nations on the matter, and also to contribute to the debate on the way forward.

Uganda has taken the issues of economic advancement and social development very seriously for the last decade under its current Movement Administration. The Copenhagen Declaration went a long way in reinforcing and providing further momentum and encouragement for what Uganda was already doing.

On the economic management front, Uganda has implemented a very comprehensive programme of economic reforms designed to achieve, inter alia, three things: first, to correct macroeconomic imbalances; secondly, to institute financial-stabilization and structural-adjustment policies designed to correct distortions in resource allocations across all sectors; and thirdly, to improve microeconomic efficiency and transform the economy to achieve sustainable growth.

In addition to those policy actions, public institutions have been privatized, the financial markets liberalized and the civil service restructured with a

view to making it more efficient. As a consequence of those policy measures, for the last 10 years Uganda's gross domestic product has grown at an annual rate of 6 per cent, and inflation has been held to an average of 5 per cent per annum.

So much for the economic side of Uganda's endeavours. I know that the Assembly expects me to now revert to the question of social development, for which this session has been specifically convened.

In line with the Copenhagen Declaration, the Government of Uganda believes that the gap between the haves and have-nots must be narrowed. All citizens, especially the vulnerable and marginalized, must be empowered. Poverty must be reduced and if possible eradicated. Dignity must be restored to every Ugandan, especially to those belonging to the vulnerable groups. The Government has taken serious measures to ensure that the people's rights are respected — rights to food, rights to work, rights to education, rights to free expression, rights to primary health care and such like.

Conscious of the plight of the vulnerable and marginalized groups, which encompass women, youth, children, people with disabilities and the elderly, the Uganda Government has put in place policy measures and institutions to address their interests and concerns. One such institution is the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development. Women, youth and people with disabilities are now represented in parliament and all administrative councils. All projects and programmes, as well as leadership positions, are gender-responsive as a result of the gender-mainstreaming policy of the Government. The Assembly may be aware, for example, that Uganda's Vice-President is a woman, and many more women have assumed decision-making positions in the country.

The Government of Uganda believes in the necessity of economic and social empowerment, through education, training, sensitization and the fight against poverty. Following a deliberate Parliament decision, compulsory universal primary education was established four years ago. This programme dramatically increased enrolment in primary schools from 2.9 million in 1996 to 6.6 million in 1999. Over the same period, girls' enrolment has gone up by 40 per cent while that of boys has increased by 9 per cent. The challenge is now to ensure quality education by coping with the increased numbers and to provide sufficient classrooms, teachers and teaching materials. There is also a need to ensure reduced drop-out rates, especially for the girl child.

Specific programmes have been established to address the problems of poverty. One such initiative is the Poverty Eradication Action Plan, which establishes the policy framework for the eradication of poverty and prioritizes public actions across sectors with the objective of poverty eradication through participatory approaches. A complementary but comprehensive plan for the modernization of agriculture has also been developed to contribute to the eradication of poverty. Other initiatives include programmes of microfinance to offer deserving groups concessional terms and skill-development programmes, which are organized to benefit specific groups. Non-governmental organizations and civil society have also played a complementary role in the fight against poverty.

There is in Uganda a commission on human rights to which abuses of people's rights are reported, and by which such complaints are handled. There is also the office of the Inspector General of Government. Elsewhere — in Europe, for example — this official might be called an ombudsman. The official investigates corruption and abuse of office by public officials and subsequently takes corrective actions.

In the health sector Uganda has prioritized health-care services in the following areas: HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, immunization of children, child nutrition, and reproductive and maternal health care. Emphasis is also placed on the population having access to safe and clean water. As a result of Government initiatives in the health sector, especially in the promotion of awareness and the immunization of children, the indicators show that infant mortality is now 88 per 1,000 live births, as compared to 188 per 1,000 in 1986.

The national prevalence rate for HIV/AIDS decreased from 18.5 per cent in 1995 to 9.5 per cent in 1998, which translates into a 50 per cent decline. However, access to treatment for those already living with AIDS is a national challenge and requires concerted efforts on the part of the international community.

In order to have sustainable economic growth while tackling the problems of poverty, social integration, unemployment and provision of basic

social services, we will require not only the pursuit of comprehensive and coherent economic policies but also continued goodwill and support from our development partners. Although a lot has been achieved in the area of social development in Uganda, there is room for improvement through additional requisite human and financial resources.

I should add that the aforementioned achievements took place with the assistance of Uganda's development partners, which include the donor community, non-governmental organizations, the private sector, the United Nations system and the Ugandan people themselves. While expressing appreciation to our partners, I invite them to remain with us for yet greater development challenges in the years that lie ahead.

I would be remiss to talk about achieving social development for all without mentioning the challenges facing us in implementing the Copenhagen Declaration in a globalizing world. It is a fact that, with globalization, today there is more rampant poverty, and the gap between the rich and poor is widening both within and between nations. Our concern has been the lack of sufficient social safety nets to ensure that the social costs of this process are not unfairly borne by poor people and marginalized groups.

This special session has provided an excellent opportunity for us all to take stock of the lessons and experiences of the past and to look forward to improving upon these new ideas and future directions. On this historic occasion, Uganda would like to reiterate its commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action adopted at the World Summit in 1995, and we are looking forward to the emergence of further initiatives currently being discussed at this session.

The Ugandan Government will continue to strengthen and coordinate its effort in partnership with the Bretton Woods institutions, relevant non-governmental organizations, the private sector, civil society, the donor community and the United Nations, so as to accelerate the social transformation of our society.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Mya Than, Chairman of the delegation of Myanmar.

Mr. Than (Myanmar): Allow me to begin by extending our warmest congratulations to the President on his unanimous election to lead the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world." We are confident that he will be able to steer the proceedings of this Assembly to a successful conclusion.

The draft texts of the political declaration and further actions and initiatives now being considered by the Assembly can be summarized in the following three propositions: first, we should achieve sustainable economic development and poverty eradication by fulfilling the targets set by the World Social Summit. Secondly, we should step up social development, supported by sustainable economic development, by fulfilling the targets set by the World Social Summit. Thirdly, we should ensure that the centre of economic and social development is the people and their well-being, which entails food security, primary health care and basic education. In order to achieve these goals, action is required at both the national and international levels.

Allow me to apprise the Assembly briefly of a few selected instances of our national endeavours to achieve these lofty goals in Myanmar. Through the implementation of four national economic objectives, Myanmar is making steady and sustained progress in terms of economic development and poverty alleviation. Our short-term Four-Year Plan from 1992/1993 to 1995/1996 was a success, registering an average annual gross domestic product growth rate of 7.5 per cent against the targeted rate of 5.1 per cent. Despite the spillover effect of the Asian financial crisis, Myanmar was able to maintain the annual gross domestic product growth rate at 4.6 per cent in 1997-1998. By 1998-1999, Myanmar's economy had bounced back, registering a gross domestic product growth rate of 5.7 per cent. The nation's annual gross domestic product growth rate has now reached a high point by registering 10.9 per cent in the current financial year, 1999-2000.

The Government's economic development strategy is people-centred and is aimed at the alleviation and eventual eradication of poverty in rural areas, particularly in the less developed border areas. Consequently, national races in the border areas of Myanmar are enjoying a higher level of socio-

economic development, higher living standards and happier lives than they have ever experienced before.

As regards the drug problem, Myanmar is indeed a country at the forefront of the war against illicit drugs. The determination, commitment and sacrifice of Myanmar in combating the menace of illicit drugs are now being increasingly recognized by the international community. To cite just one example, Myanmar has sacrificed the lives of 716 members of the armed forces in military operations to interdict drug traffickers.

One significant accomplishment in this respect has been the establishment of a drug-free zone in Mongla region in the Eastern Shan State. More drug-free zones have been declared and are being implemented. More importantly, the Myanmar Government has launched a Master Plan for 1999-2014 to totally eradicate poppy cultivation and the drug menace in the country within 15 years.

We fully subscribe to the concept of people-centred development, as contained in the Copenhagen Declaration. We strongly believe that socio-economic development should be geared to the basic needs of the people. This coincides with the traditional Myanmar saying that it is essential to provide the basic needs of the people — food, clothing and shelter.

In accordance with this dictum, the Government of the Union of Myanmar has been doing its utmost to provide food, clothing and shelter, primary health care and basic education to all its citizens. The requirement to satisfy these basic human needs indeed constitutes the foundation of the right to development.

By fulfilling these basic needs of the people, the Government is promoting and advancing the right of the people of Myanmar to development, inclusive of economic and social development.

At the same time, the Government is intensifying its efforts to further improve the economic and social conditions of the people to the best of its ability. Myanmar society has also reached a high level of social integration. In this context, it is worth noting that the unique way of life of the Myanmar family is at the heart of the process of effective social integration in Myanmar. In this respect, the infrastructure-building and border-area development undertaken by the Government is also facilitating social integration among the national races in the country.

Let me now touch briefly upon some aspects of achieving social development in a globalizing world.

The greatest challenge facing humankind today is economic development and poverty eradication. In a globalizing world, poverty anywhere can jeopardize prosperity everywhere. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) *Poverty Report*, the number people living under the poverty line throughout the world was estimated at 1.2 billion in 1998. It is therefore imperative that urgent and effective measures be taken to eradicate poverty in the developing countries and to bridge the gap between the rich and the poor.

Globalization presents us with both enormous challenges and great opportunities. While preventive measures must be taken to neutralize its negative effects, we must accentuate the positive and take advantage of the vast possibilities it offers to facilitate our economic and social development.

Our programme of action at the international level should effectively address crucial issues such as debt relief, improved market access for developing countries, and international assistance for economic development and poverty eradication in those countries.

Undoubtedly, capacity-building for developing countries is of crucial importance. This is also an area in which international assistance is very much needed.

We cannot achieve the objectives set out in our programme of action in a world that is half poor and half rich, half developing and half developed. We must not rest on our present laurels. We must not slacken the pace but sustain and step up the momentum of our efforts to realize our shared vision of a better world, where economic prosperity, social justice and social harmony will prevail.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker on the list for this morning.

I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

May I remind members that statements in the exercise of the right of reply are limited to 10 minutes for the first intervention and to five minutes for the second intervention and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Ms. Tesfaye (Ethiopia): Mr. President, since my delegation is taking the floor for the first time in the formal deliberations of this special session of the General Assembly, let me put on record our profound appreciation for the outstanding leadership and guidance you have demonstrated in the work of the Assembly.

I would not have intervened at this point in time had it not been for the unsubstantiated allegations directed against my country by the Eritrean delegation. Hence my delegation is obliged to refute the usual deceitful propaganda and prevarication levelled against Ethiopia by the delegation of Eritrea. We would like to set the record straight, as follows.

The international community knows full well that Ethiopia is the victim of the unprovoked aggression of Eritrea. In fact, the naked aggression of Eritrea against Ethiopia in May 1998 was a continuation of the aggressive policy of the Government of Eritrea against its neighbours. It is to be noted that Eritrea, in its brief existence as an independent State, has waged wars of aggression against its four neighbours; the last victim of these aggressive and expansionist policies is Ethiopia. In order to advance its policies of destabilization, the Eritrean Government has conscripted 10 per cent of its population for military purposes. Eritrea, with a population of less than 3.5 million, has an army which in 1998 was three times larger than Ethiopia's. Ethiopia has been dragged into this unwanted war in the exercise of its inherent right of self-defence. In fact, Ethiopia has never, ever, in its long history, provoked or committed any act of aggression against a sovereign State or country.

We believe that Eritrea must be held accountable not only for its aggression against Ethiopia but also for diverting our attention and scarce resources from the fight against poverty and backwardness, which are the primary enemies of our peoples. Eritrea has no moral or legal right to accuse the Ethiopian Defence Forces of looting and destruction of private and public property. In fact, it was the Eritrean Government that confiscated private and public property worth more than $200 million from the ports of Assab and Massawa in the wake of its war of aggression of May 1998. This is a subject that is well documented and which is being carefully handled by the appropriate regional and international bodies for compensation as soon as possible.

Eritrea should also be held responsible for killing close to 200 innocent civilians and for abducting about 650 others in the first few days of the war alone. As people fled for their lives, over 350,000 were displaced from their homes and communities, and many individuals were separated from their families, including thousands of children, who still do not know the whereabouts of their parents. Furthermore, at least 34 schools, 14 health centres, 15 wells and 8,000 houses were destroyed by the Eritrean troops in the occupied Ethiopian territories.

At this particular point in time, close to 50,000 Ethiopian civilians have been rounded up, detained and tortured in concentration camps in Eritrea by the Eritrean army and security agents. These are innocent Ethiopians residing in Eritrea. We urge the international community to take immediate measures to rescue these innocent civilians from the immeasurable sufferings they are facing before we witness gruesome humanitarian tragedies in the Horn of Africa.

To hide these horrendous crimes, the Eritrean regime continues with its baseless propaganda with regard to Eritrean nationals asked to leave Ethiopia for compelling national security reasons. Ethiopia has always been fully transparent with regard to Eritrean nationals in Ethiopia.

My Government was forced to ask some Eritrean nationalists to go back to their country because they were found engaged in activities against the national security of Ethiopia to help the war efforts of their country. This limited action was done in full accordance with the national laws of the country and international obligations. However, the Eritrean regime tries to exploit this matter for its war propaganda and hate campaign against Ethiopia. Ethiopia, in its resolute determination not to reward aggression and to protect its sovereignty, has exercised its legal rights to defend itself and has successfully reversed the Eritrean aggression.

Finally, we would like to bring to the attention of this body the fact that by accusing Ethiopia at this social forum, the Eritrean delegation has tried to undermine the agreement reached in Algiers on 10 June 2000. The agreement, brokered by the Organization of African Unity (OAU), under the chairmanship of the Algerian President — the current Chairman of the OAU — and with the participation of the United States and the European Union, clearly states that both parties

should restrain themselves from any form of hostilities which hinders the process of achieving lasting peace in the region.

With the disregard manifested by the Eritrean delegation, it is clear that Eritrea has no interest in a lasting peace, which is the prerequisite for social development.

Mr. Kazhoyan (Armenia): It was not the intention of my delegation to take the floor at this hour. However, the statement of one of the delegations earlier today compelled me to speak on issues not directly related to social development.

Listening to the final part of the statement of the Azerbaijani Minister this afternoon, I remembered a saying which goes, "Regardless of how many times one pronounces sugar, it will never make one's mouth sweeter". What I want to say is that, regardless of the fact that within the last 24 hours the Azerbaijani delegation has at least three times referred to some sort of aggression, 20 per cent occupation and 1 million refugees, the just will of the Nagorny-Karabakh people for its right to self-determination will never qualify as aggression or occupation. Period.

I was also surprised to hear, on the one hand, references to such a brilliant personality as Franklin Delano Roosevelt, and, on the other hand, lies, exaggerated data and unacceptable terminology in reference to another Member State.

While Armenia is doing its best to accommodate the refugees and the internally displaced persons and to integrate them into society without politicizing their problems in any way whatsoever, Azerbaijan has kept the internally displaced persons hostage to its political gains.

Are there any problems that Azerbaijan would like to settle here? Well, there are at least two official frameworks for addressing those concerns — bilateral and multilateral — within the framework of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) Minsk Group. Armenia is ready to address these issues there, and we actually do discuss them. We can also acknowledge the ongoing cooperation between the Armenian and Azerbaijani non-governmental, human rights and grass-roots organizations.

So what is the use of sticking phrases like "20 per cent of occupied territories and 1 million refugees" into each and every statement of Azerbaijan on every possible subject, from issues of social development to problems of, for example, preservation and breeding of the sturgeon in the Caspian Sea? Instead of taking the image of a poor victim and putting the blame for each and every thing happening on this planet and in outer space on so-called Armenian aggression, that country, in the course of these years, should have accommodated at least some of its internally displaced persons in the more than 100,000 houses and apartments of the deported Armenians who used to live in Azerbaijan.

We think that a better way to move forward and to advance one's social development agenda is through regional cooperation and mutual understanding, not by seeking further escalation through making controversial statements at this forum.

Mr. Seyoum (Eritrea): It is not my intention to respond to the bountiful lies of the Ethiopian representative, which could not be verified by independent bodies; rather, I will dwell on the human dimension that is relevant to the topic of this special session.

When the head of my delegation made his statement this morning, it was in relation to the social development that this session is discussing. It was not in the political sense. So I do not want to make any political statements, but rather to bring up a very independent report by the BBC to just cite one of those cruel acts committed by the Ethiopian occupation in the last few days. This is, as I mentioned, a report of the BBC, on Wednesday, 21 June 2000. In this report, the reporter says:

> "The western Eritrean town of Tesseney has changed hands four times in the last month. The town is now under Eritrean control following an Ethiopian withdrawal on Monday.
>
> "However, the second period of Ethiopian occupation has left an indelible mark on the once thriving city whose population of 60,000 fled.
>
> "The hospital has been completely stripped. Medicine, equipment, even beds, have been taken. The church's kindergarten has been looted.
>
> "The school has been burnt along with the two banks, the petrol station, a grain store and the local administration building.

"Even the prayer mats have been taken from the mosque.

"The destruction was widespread. Yet locals said there had been no fighting in the town.

"An estimated 90 per cent of Tesseney has been looted, around 50 per cent was burnt or destroyed.

"Every conceivable kind of business has been broken into and the contents taken. What was left was set on fire.

"Private homes stand with the doors ajar; inside the remaining contents are strewn around. Dead livestock lie rotting in the sun.

"Around 50 Eritrean civilians remained during the occupation ...

"They said that within a day of the Ethiopians taking Tesseney, empty trucks with some Ethiopian civilians were brought into the town to help with the looting.

"Tables and chairs have been left piled outside many buildings — the Ethiopians were unable to fit them into the trucks.

"The legacy of what happened in Tesseney is difficult for many to accept ...

"Stretching south from Tesseney, the trail of destruction continues. The village of Aligidir, formerly home to 3,000 people, was one such victim.

"Warped metal sheets creak in the morning breeze, strewn around on the blackened earth among half-burnt wooden posts and the charred remains of pots and pans.

"Situated 10 km south of Tesseney, Aligidir was once a thriving centre for agricultural products and cotton growing.

"The handful of people who stayed in the village during the Ethiopian occupation told a story which is becoming familiar in this part of western Eritrea.

"They said that on Sunday, Ethiopian troops started looting the houses, then they set them on fire ...

"Not much of the village is left standing ...

"Instead, the new $40m cotton factory, the centre of the village's employment, was destroyed, as were the Government buildings.

"It is difficult to assess the long-term costs of what happened here."

This is just a single story that I wanted to share with this body. There are many towns that have met the same fate, but I am not going to repeat myself because I would be wasting this Assembly's time.

The Acting President: The Ethiopian delegation has asked for the floor. I would just like to remind delegations that the second intervention should not exceed five minutes.

Mr. Tesfaye (Ethiopia): When we first took the floor in exercise of our right of reply we clearly stated that we were compelled to do so because of Eritrea's provocation. Following its usual pattern of behaviour, the Eritrean delegation has once again undermined this special session of the General Assembly by injecting issues that are not under consideration and that are out of context.

Nonetheless, it is wish of my delegation to reveal the truth and expose this malicious propaganda campaign. First of all, Ethiopia, unlike Eritrea, does not have any territorial ambitions regarding its neighbours, nor does it allow its territory to be occupied by unprovoked Eritrean aggression.

Secondly, unlike the Eritrean regime, Ethiopia respects the rule of law and the principles that govern inter-State relations, and it is committed to the peaceful settlement of disputes.

Thirdly, the Eritrean Government's hostility towards Ethiopian nationals residing in Eritrea is so abysmal that presently thousands of Ethiopians are exposed to maltreatment, imprisonment and summary executions — not to mention the prisoners of war whose whereabouts have yet to be identified by either the International Committee of the Red Cross or other humanitarian organizations.

Fourthly, Eritrea's commitment to international and regional agreements sharply contrasts with its deeds, as we have witnessed today, when the Eritrean delegation unfaithfully contradicted the cessation-of-hostilities agreement brokered by the Organization of African Unity, the United States of America and the European Union.

Regarding the issues that have been described in Tesseney, to our knowledge all that has been claimed to have happened in Tesseney is the concoction of a group of journalists who are affiliated with one side, and their allegations are neither documented nor substantiated by a neutral body.

My conclusion is that he who sows stones may not harvest grapes. My delegation thinks that the international community should prevail upon the Eritrean regime so that it does not sow the seeds of destabilization.

Mr. Seyoum (Eritrea): May I apologize for taking the floor for a second time. I just want to say that it is not my delegation's business to defend the credibility of the BBC, but what I read to this body was a report of the BBC of 21 June 2000. This was not a report of my Government or of any journalist from Eritrea; it was from the BBC. I stand by the statement that was made by the head of my delegation this morning.

The meeting rose at 6.15 p.m.

United Nations A/S-24/PV.9

General Assembly

Twenty-fourth special session

Official Records

9th meeting
Friday, 30 June 2000, 10 a.m.
Geneva

President: Mr. Gurirab ..... (Namibia)

In the absence of the President, Mr. Khorram (Islamic Republic of Iran), Vice-President, took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Agenda item 3 (*continued*)

Credentials of representatives to the special session of the General Assembly

(b) Report of the Credentials Committee (A/S-24/7)

The Acting President: The General Assembly will now take action on the draft resolution recommended by the Credentials Committee in paragraph 15 of its report. The Credentials Committee adopted the draft resolution without a vote. May I take it that the General Assembly wishes to do the same?

The draft resolution was adopted (resolution S-24/1).

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded its consideration of agenda item 3 (b).

Agenda item 8 (*continued*)

Proposals for further initiatives for social development

(a) Review and appraisal of progress since the World Summit for Social Development

(b) Proposals for further initiatives for the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration on Social Development and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development

The Acting President: I first give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Bedredin Ibraimi, Deputy Prime Minister of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.

Mr. Ibraimi (the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia) (*spoke in Macedonian; English text furnished by the delegation*): At the outset, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, I would like to congratulate Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on his election as President of the General Assembly at its special session on the implementation of decision adopted at the World Summit on Social Development. We thank him for his efforts in successfully organizing the session and express the hope that our work will be successful and fruitful. I would also like to take this opportunity to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, for his commitment to the special session and to the results that it is expected to produce. Furthermore, allow me to thank Switzerland for its hospitality and its efforts, along with the citizens of Geneva. Our thanks go also to all others who made a contribution to the organization of this important session.

The start of the new millennium is the right moment to review what has been achieved thus far and to promote our future commitments in the field of

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social development. The several sessions held by the Preparatory Committee and by the Commission for Social Development demonstrated that little progress has been made in implementing the commitments undertaken at the World Summit on Social Development. Seen from the perspective of the twenty-first century, it can be concluded that the twentieth century was the one in which humanity reached the highest level of technological development, but it was also one in which we faced the greatest sufferings and humiliation, a century in which poverty was not eradicated, a century without full employment, social integration and social services for all.

The basic goals of every society are to decrease and eradicate poverty and to improve the standard of living of its people. It is necessary to undertake appropriate measures and policies to reach these goals. The United Nations has an important role to play in designing international relations in this sphere, especially in terms of the globalization of the world economy and of narrowing the differences between rich and poor countries. Countries in transition, as well as developing, small and underdeveloped countries, rightfully expect that this special session will be an occasion when problems we are facing can be identified and when concrete action for the full and effective implementation of what was agreed upon in Copenhagen can be undertaken.

In the period since the 1995 World Summit, the Republic of Macedonia has been consistently pursuing a policy of stabilizing economic trends and of structural reform. The process of establishing a State governed by the rule of law within a parliamentary democracy is being continuously strengthened; the political system facilitates democratic processes; we enjoy civic tolerance, and human and civil rights and freedoms, which represent the basis upon which the Macedonian State has grown. The development of inter-ethnic relations and stability are the key to the peace and stability of the country and of the region, which form the basis for strengthening our international position.

Like other countries in transition, the Republic of Macedonia has during this period been addressing the issue of a large impoverished population and all the implications of poverty. That situation was created by several years of decline in economic activities, the insolvency of economic actors, current deficits of social funds, the implementation of privatization and structural reforms, and the implementation of a stabilization policy. In order to permit accelerated economic development, a precondition for social development, the Government of the Republic of Macedonia, in May this year, adopted its 2003 programme for economic development and reform in Macedonia.

Last year, the crisis in the region and the events in neighbouring Yugoslavia had an impact in the Republic of Macedonia as well. The social price that our State paid was increased unemployment and a large number of laid-off workers, a huge number of refugees who were accommodated on our territory, and an increase in the number of families that were the beneficiaries of social assistance. However, with enhanced involvement by the Government and other entities, as well as through additional macro-economic policy measures and with the support of the international community, a larger decline in production was prevented. With the end of military activities in the region beginning in June 1999, a trend of growth in industrial production commenced. As one of the countries most affected by the Kosovo crisis, the Republic of Macedonia concluded a new arrangement with the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. In this regard, the Government decided to prepare two strategic documents: a provisional report on decreasing poverty, and a strategy for decreasing poverty.

Unemployment, among the greatest world problems, is present in the Republic of Macedonia as well. In addition to standing at a high rate, unemployment in our country also affects large numbers of young people. The Government is making efforts to increase employment. Starting in 1995, with financial assistance from the World Bank, we began implementing our project on social reforms and technical assistance, and its sub-project, the programme for re-employment. The project is being successfully implemented and its various benefits have been confirmed by representatives of the World Bank. By the end of this year we will adopt a national strategy, that is to say an agreement on employment among the Government, trade unions, chambers of commerce and other actors, to stimulate and promote forms of employment.

Regretfully, I have to stress that over the past two years, at the international level, we have seen flagrant violation of and disrespect for the fundamental values

of democratic society. In addition to the natural disasters that the world has faced, we are witnessing a growing trend towards war, conflict and internal and external tensions. From the perspective of the Republic of Macedonia, I wish to elaborate upon the huge crisis that occurred in the region of South-Eastern Europe, the consequences of which endangered stability and security in the Balkans and beyond in Europe.

The Kosovo crisis especially affected the Republic of Macedonia. We managed to deal with a huge number of refugees — 360,000, or 18 per cent of the total population. This was an economic, social and political situation that could have led to the destabilization of the country, especially if one takes into consideration the insufficiently prompt reaction of the international community. The damages that the Macedonian economy suffered, and still suffers, are huge. All of this resulted in the deterioration of an already difficult economic and social situation.

However, the citizens of the Republic of Macedonia demonstrated a high level of humanity towards the refugees. They also displayed tolerance, solidarity and moderation under the enormous social, political and economic pressures which had been created and which could have resulted in undesired consequences.

The Republic of Macedonia managed to overcome these difficulties, but their consequences can still be felt in the national economy. The elimination of these consequences requires indispensable financial assistance and support by the international community. Compensation for damages wrought on the Macedonian economy should be an obligation of the international community. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to call upon the international community to continue its efforts and consistently fulfil the commitments it has undertaken. Our presence here confirms our common commitment to strengthening cooperation in the interest of peace, stability and security, as well as of social and economic development.

Political stability as a precondition for economic development is of great relevance and importance, since without political stability we cannot imagine or achieve economic prosperity and development in our States, regions or worldwide.

I would like to underline the importance of the Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe for the Republic of Macedonia. We consider that it offers great possibilities for the region to finally live in peace, stability and prosperity and to be more promptly integrated into the European family.

In the 1999-2000 period, progress has been evident in relations between the Republic of Macedonia and the European Union. The process of association of Macedonia with the European Union commenced with the ultimate goal being integrated into the Union. It is noteworthy that the Republic of Macedonia was the first country in the region to start negotiations on the conclusion of a stabilization and association agreement. We are working intensively, and it is expected that negotiations will be completed by the end of this year.

The Republic of Macedonia is decisively committed to accelerating its integration into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Great progress has been made, and our activities and reform orientation contained in the Annual National Programme for Membership of the Republic of Macedonia in NATO have been supported.

From all that I have stated here, it can be concluded that the Republic of Macedonia actively participates in present modern global trends, and I would like to underline our commitments to a consistent respect for and implementation of the obligations undertaken at the World Summit for Social Development and at this special session.

The Acting President: I would now like to invite Her Excellency Mrs. Tembé Ashira Assih-Aissah, Minister for Social Affairs of Togo to take the floor.

Mrs. Assih-Aissah (Togo) (*spoke in French*): First and foremost, allow me to convey the warm greetings of the President of the Togolese Republic, General Gnassingbé Eyadema, and of the Togolese Government and people.

Our session's theme, "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world", deserves the interest of all of the countries in the world, especially those of Africa, whose evolution towards a better, more just and more equitable world is regularly disrupted by constant socio-political crises, wars and natural disasters. Togo thus welcomes the holding of this session and assures you, Mr. President, that it will

support any initiative that may serve to ensure the socio-economic betterment of humankind.

The economic difficulties of the 1980s confronted my country with a major challenge, that of building a just, equitable and progressive society. That meant re-thinking social development policies and ensuring that they had a real impact on the living conditions of people in the context of meagre financial resources. It is in line with these ideas that, like other countries, Togo welcomed the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen with the hope of having a process launched that would provide relevant responses to the social problems that have now been identified.

We must recognize that the pre-Copenhagen situation was not at all encouraging. The main socio-economic indicators, which had been constantly improving towards the end of the 1980s, underwent a decline following the socio-economic and political crisis which started in the year 1990. The choices and objectives that were decided upon in 1995 have allowed the Togolese Government to introduce economic reforms and to take measures that would help to place the macro-economic situation on a more healthy footing and promote sustained growth. The liberalization and restructuring of the economy have strengthened the role of civil society, particularly that of non-governmental organizations, groups and production associations, in designing and implementing development projects. Thus in the economic sector, the average annual growth rate in our country was 4.4 per cent between 1995 and 1999.

In the fight against poverty, studies have been drawn up that have made possible a real assessment of the causes of poverty and provided reliable data for the implementation of a certain number of programmes and projects. The micro-projects programme has provided considerable assistance to agricultural and tradespersons' groups and has promoted the establishment and introduction of social and community infrastructures. The extension of micro-finance to help women in certain areas has given a new dynamism to income-generating activities. The implementation of an urban development programme, giving rise to work with high labour intensity, has promoted the creation of jobs for young people. Specific projects have made it possible to improve basic services such as schools, health services, water supply and hygiene, while giving priority to the fight against AIDS, which has been the object of a systematic information and awareness campaign.

In summary, thanks to these actions, the main social indicators are gradually improving in the health and education sectors. Many other activities have also been carried out to promote women and the private sector. Concerning social integration, multi-sectoral projects, implemented with development partners, are also helping to achieve this goal.

We must recognize, however, that the constant economic adjustments and austerity measures are further marginalizing the most vulnerable and most disadvantaged segments of the population, and their ranks are constantly swelling. Despite these difficulties, those segments of the population are benefiting from many specific actions that are targeted towards promoting activities in the fields of consciousness-raising, information, education, communication, prevention and social integration.

When we turn to the subject of employment, with the combined effect of structural adjustment programmes, the socio-political crisis which our country has undergone and the incapacity of our economy to generate productive jobs on a sufficient scale, we see that the unemployment rate has worsened and is estimated to represent more than 30 per cent of the active population. Aware of the major challenge it has to face, the Government has taken an array of measures aimed at gradually curbing unemployment among young people.

The socio-political disruptions that our country experienced in its move towards democracy in the 1990s did not make it possible to create the best conditions to reverse the trend towards a decline in the living conditions of our people and the marginalization of the disadvantaged social sectors.

To end this situation, political initiatives taken with the support of the international community have made possible the signature of the Lomé framework agreement between the opposition and the presidential majority. This agreement has marked the way for the peaceful anchoring of democracy in our country. To that end, a joint monitoring committee for this Agreement has started work and an Independent National Electoral Commission has been established. Thus, efforts have been made to strengthen the rule of law.

The implementation of the Copenhagen recommendations requires considerable financial resources. This can be possible only if the commitments of solidarity and partnership between rich and poor countries are strengthened.

In that regard, measures such as the cancellation of the debt of the least developed countries, the opening up of industrialized countries' markets to products from developing countries, the introduction of more just and equitable multilateral trade rules and a reversal of the trend of reduced official development assistance should be seriously considered.

Social development for all in a globalizing world can become a reality only if there is real awareness of responsibility at all levels. Present and future generations will be eternally grateful to us for seeing to that.

The Acting President: I now call on Her Excellency Mrs. Suad El-Fatih, Adviser to the President on Women and Children's Affairs of the Sudan.

Mrs. El-Fatih (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Kofi Annan for his growing interest in third world countries and the Swiss Government for hosting this Summit in this beautiful country.

Five years have elapsed since the World Summit for Social Development adopted the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, which placed the human being at the centre of development. The leaders of our countries committed themselves to providing the much-needed political support for the eradication of poverty, the promotion of full and productive employment, the reduction of unemployment and the fostering of social integration through the implementation of the 10 Copenhagen commitments.

Those five years have failed to bring about what we had expected in terms of fulfilling the commitments and the implementation of the recommendations contained in the two Copenhagen documents. Social conditions in developing countries, particularly in Africa, continue to be stagnant, if not deteriorating, and the gap between rich and poor countries has widened. The degree of poverty has escalated in the least developed countries. A sharp decline in employment opportunities is clearly manifested and has led to the crippling of the process of social integration. This has had a negative impact on structural adjustment programmes. The unprecedented heavy burden of external debt and debt-servicing represents a major obstacle to the attainment of development in the indebted countries. It has become evident that the process of globalization, which is based on liberalization of trade, is exacerbating the already precarious economic situation in developing countries, particularly in Africa.

If appropriate preventive measures are not taken, the negative impact of globalization will result in the further deterioration of conditions in developing countries. It will also lead to an increase in poverty levels and to considerable job losses, thus negatively affecting social development. The globalization and monopolization of information will lead to the marginalization of cultures and the disintegration of the identity of many communities.

Although we recognize that social development is a national responsibility, it cannot be successfully and optimally achieved without the collective commitments and efforts of the international community. In this connection, we believe in the necessity of fulfilling the yet-to-be-attained internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of the gross national product of developed countries for official development assistance as soon as possible.

We reiterate the importance of finding an effective, equitable, development-oriented solution to the external debt and debt-servicing burdens of developing countries, which curtail their social development. The Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative must be financed and implemented. The restructuring of the international economic system is imperative in order to bring about transparency and stability in the international monetary system and to make the Bretton Woods institutions more democratic and responsive to the challenges of development, within the framework of international monetary integration.

We emphasize the importance of enhancing the capacities of developing countries to overcome obstacles to development within the framework of economic globalization by augmenting the trend of industrialization, strengthening national infrastructures, transfer of technology and access to knowledge and information through international assistance. Another important aspect is increasing and improving access for

products of developing countries to international markets through the reduction of tariff barriers and other protectionist measures.

We call upon our development partners to show more political resolve and genuine willingness to help developing countries improve their competitiveness in international markets. This can be attained only through generous financial assistance from the industrialized world directed towards improving and enhancing weak infrastructures and augmenting national institutional capacities.

It is imperative to put an end to the practice of imposing economic sanctions and unilateral economic coercive measures, in contravention of international law and the Charter of the United Nations, if we are to create an international environment conducive to social development for all. We should ensure the right to development as an indivisible component of internationally recognized human rights and the right to food and medical care for all. I reiterate, it is imperative to end economic sanctions and unilateral economically coercive measures, in accordance with the relevant resolutions of the United Nations.

The international community should make greater efforts to combat endemic diseases, especially malaria, which is considered the greatest threat to life in a considerable number of developing countries, particularly in Africa. African heads of State recently held a special summit to address this scourge.

Notwithstanding the unfavourable international atmosphere, my country, as I stated earlier, has registered remarkable progress in the area of social development. I will briefly highlight some of the achievements of the past five years.

First, in the field of economic development, the Sudan has had a free market economy during that period. The rate of growth of the country's gross domestic product averaged 5.6 per cent during the period 1995-1999, while the inflation rate was reduced to 16 per cent by the year 1999, as compared to 69.1 per cent in 1995. That rate continued to decrease during the first half of 2000. Due to liberal economic policies, the Sudan was able to attract flows of foreign direct investment in the areas of oil, mining, energy, agriculture and livestock.

Secondly, in the area of popular political participation, in order to achieve balanced development, the Sudan has adopted an advanced federal system of government. This decentralized form of government has increased administration at the local level and proved to be the ideal way to ensure political participation from the grass-roots to the uppermost levels. To ensure the bridging of developmental gaps and disparities between states, the federal Government has allocated financial resources to the States Development Fund to support development activities in the least developed States.

Thirdly, in order to expedite the eradication of poverty, the Government has formulated an effective strategy and has sought to implement it by incorporating the poor and disadvantaged in the cycle of production. Two and a half million poor families have been provided with suitable means for working productively by the year 2002; the social security umbrella has been extended to cover a wider range of sectors; and specialized social funds have been established to protect financially vulnerable groups from the negative effects of the structural adjustment programmes, by the time the national comprehensive strategy is carried to completion, in the year 2002. The Sudanese Savings Bank for Social Development was established to help the poor and to help provide production tools to small-scale producers and to the disadvantaged. The *zakat* and *wafq*-endowment resources are also being directed towards the poor.

Fourthly, in order to foster productive employment and widen its scope, the Sudan articulated and implemented a national economic-recovery strategy from 1989 to 1993, with a view to achieving comprehensive sustainable development. This strategy aimed at producing a skilled labour force in order to enhance productivity, empowering women through their active involvement in the national economy and reducing unemployment rates by the end of the national comprehensive strategy in the year 2002. The expansion of work opportunities in the countryside was also targeted, with a view to improving living standards there and to reducing migration from the countryside to urban centres. Preferential privileges were granted to labour-intensive projects, with the objective of creating labour opportunities for 1 million people and of eradicating child labour during the last three-year programme of the national comprehensive strategy.

Fifthly, the ongoing effort to empower women and promote the welfare of children reached its climax after it was made a direct responsibility of the

presidency. The President of the Republic has appointed a woman to be his adviser on women's and children's affairs. This advisory body is now engaged in formulating a new strategy, defining programmes for enabling women and protecting the welfare of families and children, and articulating ways and means for the effective implementation of this strategy.

The establishment of this unique advisory body has increased the value, vitality and efficiency of the Government's work with women and for child welfare. The strategies of the advisory body regarding women and children are manifested in recent presidential decrees. One of the important decisions of this body has been to establish a children's parliament in order to promote the values of dialogue, personal opinions, rights, duties and democracy in the minds of our children. With respect to women and motherhood, and upon the recommendation of the advisory body the President of the Republic has decreed that all women charged with minor crimes be released and be rehabilitated so that they can lead decent and honourable lives. The decree went further: it prohibited the imprisonment of pregnant women until after they have given birth and had two years to care for the offspring.

The advisory body has recommended that, besides the already approved pregnancy leave, women be given maternal leave for two years, with full pay during the first six months. Financial subsidies will be given to women during the remaining 18 months of the leave. These subsidies will come from the maternal and childhood fund, which gets its resources from the *zakat*, its endowment, voluntary contributions and investment revenues.

Women in the Sudan have made remarkable progress due to their continued struggle and wisdom. Women are active partners in all walks of life in the community. They now occupy high-ranking positions. There have been women members of Parliament since 1965, as well as women advisers to the President, women ministers, under-secretaries and executive directors in the private and public sectors, and high-ranking women officers in the army and the police forces. There are more than five hundred woman judges, four of them in our Supreme Court. The number of women in university and post-graduate institutions is far greater than the number of men. Women make up on average 62 per cent of matriculating students. The Constitution and laws of the Sudan do not discriminate between men and women. In the midst of all this progress, there are no conflicts between men and women in our society, and our families are intact and provide good care for our children and promote community cohesion.

Sixthly, as a result of the progress I have mentioned, the employment rate has risen by 33 per cent during the last decade. The percentage of women in the labour market has exceeded that of men both in towns and in the countryside. The use of child labour has been reduced, thanks to the expansion of pre-school education through the establishment of kindergartens in urban and rural areas.

It is evident that the ability of Sudanese society to promote social integration and mutual support has greatly increased. Sudanese society has proved its ability to deal positively with its cultural, religious, geographic and ethnic diversities.

These abilities were enhanced by being enshrined in the 1998 national Constitution of the Sudan, which stipulated the adoption of a democratic, multiparty system and the respect of internationally recognized human rights and freedoms. It also established equality before the law and the fact that citizenship is the basis of constitutional rights and duties. The Constitution also guarantees all groups the inherent right to preserve their culture, language and religion and to raise their children as they wish.

Our common goal of placing social development high on the agenda of the international community should inspire us to serious collective reflection and to devise appropriate means to safeguard our noble humanistic objectives against the vagaries of politics. We should not give our narrow national interests precedence over the overall progress of humanity, as we should pave the way for safety and stability for all. We must strive to ensure that prosperity is enjoyed by all humankind.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Mrs. Sumedha Jayasena, Minister for Social Services of Sri Lanka.

Mrs. Jayasena (Sri Lanka) (*spoke in Sinhalese; English text furnished by the delegation*): Mr. President, let me at the outset extend to you the congratulations of the people and the Government of Sri Lanka. It is also my privilege to continue with the good work done by the previous Ministers for Social

Services in the Government of Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka lost no time in implementing the outcome of the World Summit for Social Development. Our Government advocates a policy of development with a human face, hence social development is a top priority for us. The World Summit was timely in that it sought a new social development paradigm within and between countries. What is now required is for us to work to implement and follow up the Programme of Action.

A mid-term review of the outcome of the World Summit was held at Manila in 1997 for the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) region. Now, at the end of the fifth year, we are gathered here for the global review. Sri Lanka takes modest pride in our achievements with respect to the pledges made at the World Summit, despite constraints brought about by terrorist violence and lack of resources. Nevertheless, much remains to be done in the short to medium term.

Sri Lanka has been noted since the early 1950s as a social development model because of its strong emphasis on improving the quality of life of the people and because of its complex social protection and integration programmes, at times at the expense of investment in economic growth. Our achievements in the area of health and education have been above the global average. By 1999, Sri Lanka had achieved an infant mortality rate of 15.9 per 1,000 births, a maternal mortality rate of 2.3 per 10,000 live births, and a life expectancy of 73.1 years, which is only 3 per cent below the average for the developed world. On the educational front, Sri Lanka has achieved a 90.7 per cent literacy rate.

Currently, the programmes and projects on social development are well focused and better targeted. The programmes range from pauper allowances; special protection programmes for the disabled, for vulnerable women, and for children and the elderly; and pensions and social security for the self-employed poor. These programmes provide the necessary socio-economic safety net to the vulnerable and marginalized groups during the transition to sustainable and equitable economic growth and development.

A number of legal enactments related to different aspects of social development, such as protection for workers, labour wage security and social welfare measures and schemes, have been promulgated since 1994.

A number of presidential task forces have also been set up. These task forces examine and recommend better ways of empowering, and protecting the rights of, women and children as well as the disabled and the elderly, and they also recommend ways of streamlining and increasing the relevance and coverage of basic elements of social development such as education and health care.

Further, national steering committees on various aspects of social development have been set up pursuant to the decisions of the World Summit. These mechanisms contribute to and facilitate policy-making on social development at the national level through the promotion of an active dialogue among State agencies, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations and the private sector on issues of social programme implementation, coverage and effectiveness.

These steering committees also deliberate and make decisions on other vital matters, such as the improved targeting of programmes, the empowerment of socio-economically marginalized groups and the need for a national data base with multi-user access. With the technical and financial support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and under the guidance of the National Committee on Social Development, a technical proposal for the establishment of a social development management information system has now been completed. This information system will become functional in about a month's time.

We have taken many targeted measures to ameliorate social conditions for important segments of our society. However, national efforts alone cannot address all social development challenges. Sri Lanka is committed to liberal market economic policies, with the aim of integrating into the world economy. Like many other developing countries in similar situations, we too have come to terms with the irreversible process of globalization — a process that offers both challenges and opportunities.

With capital, production and management moving across borders, the impact of globalization on our societies has become immense. This process also brings in its wake additional demands on our societies. The rule-based multilateral trading system that came into being with the creation of the World Trade

Organization was a response to the evolving process of globalization. However, the new multilateral trading system has not brought the promised benefits in terms of market access to developing countries, nor were the obligations that have been imposed on developing countries consistent with their level of economic development. There is great concern, therefore, that the new multilateral trading system is not balanced and that the benefits of the Uruguay Round were not fair and equitable. It is therefore increasingly felt that the framework rules in the international trade arena should take into account the development dimension and the impact such rules have on developing countries if we are to prevent small economies from being further marginalized in the global economy. In such a situation, even the best laid national social development plans can become unsustainable. Even more disturbing would be the erosion of past social development achievements.

What is required to provide better living and social standards for our people is greater market access with the imposition of fewer restraints and conditionalities. Social standards or issues should not constitute protectionism in disguise, intended to deny market access. Demands that new labour standards or environmental measures should be linked to trade are tantamount to a further denial of market access to developing countries. This would in turn have a negative impact on economic and social development, because developing countries would be deprived of the ability to take advantage of their own competitive and comparative advantages. We believe that greater market access and the resulting economic growth would be the most sustainable way to improve social standards for our peoples. Economic history amply demonstrates that truth.

As we redefine our development strategies, my Government is committed to following that sustainable course. As advocated by Her Excellency The Honourable Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga, President of Sri Lanka, we will pursue a free market economy with a human face, and will provide safety nets for the vulnerable segments of society.

The Acting President: I call next on His Excellency Mr. Edgardo Mosqueira, Minister of the Presidency of the Republic of Peru.

Mr. Mosqueira (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): I am very pleased to be here, participating in this debate on key aspects of the implementation of the World Summit for Social Development. Peru has formulated a strategy for the implementation of the commitments that were laid down at Copenhagen in 1995, in particular commitments 2 and 8, comprising four tools for the promotion of national development, the reduction of poverty and laying the foundations for generating wealth. They are: to strengthen the economic stability of the country and ensure a suitable institutional framework for the efficient operation of the market economy; to consolidate the country's internal and external pacification by dismantling terrorist movements, sustaining the fight against drug-trafficking gangs and settling pending boundary problems; to build capacity in the neediest sectors by investing in the social and economic infrastructure; and to create opportunities for the development of communities and of citizens.

Extreme poverty dropped by more than 12 percentage points between 1991 and 1997: from 26.8 per cent to 14.7 per cent. As for total poverty, it fell by almost 7 percentage points in that same period. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) indicates that Peru is in eightieth place in the Human Development Index, a rise of six places compared with its 1998 ranking.

I would like to share some of the principles that have guided our strategy. Regarding commitment 1, the various social programmes that have been undertaken to build the capacities and opportunities of which I spoke share a variety of mechanisms for participation by citizens in the selection and prioritization of plans and projects, as well as in their implementation and financing. Citizens have thus become important elements of society's control of State action and of ownership of the programmes and projects by the beneficiary communities. This has fostered the establishment of trust between the State and civil society, an important element that had previously been neglected. It has made possible the accumulation of social capital in terms of organization, training and leadership of the communities.

Considerable investment has been made in capacity-building in the context of commitment 6 of the Copenhagen Declaration. As a result of the investment in health, the coverage of primary-care institutions doubled between 1995 and 1998, going from 6 million to 12.4 million users. School attendance by children between the ages of 6 and 11 rose from

87.3 per cent in 1993 to 95.6 in 1998: almost universal attendance. The coverage of the drinking-water network amounted to 67.7 per cent in 1998, compared with 57.4 per cent in 1993, while sewage network coverage rose from 40 per cent to 52 per cent within the same period. Through investment in the energy sector, we increased coverage at the national level from 52 per cent of the population in 1993 to 72 per cent in 1998.

Thanks to the participatory strategy of our social programmes, many communities are now capable of managing programmes and projects. This has made it possible, for example, to hand over to them the management of the health centres.

In the implementation of commitment 3 of the Declaration, the capacity-building process of which I have spoken has gone hand-in-hand with an effort to generate opportunities for the poorest members of the population. We are convinced that it is necessary for the State to support the special role of individuals as generators of their own incomes and of improved social and economic conditions. This line of action is based on defining visions of local development, identifying the competitive and comparative advantages of the various regions, and identifying the goods and services that communities can develop to become part of an integrated market.

Regarding commitments 4, 5 and 6, our Ministry for the Advancement of Woman and Human Development was created in 1996 with the specific mission of emphasizing the promotion of citizenship and the inclusion of vulnerable or disadvantaged groups. Our national literacy programme, which received the King Sejong Literacy Prize from the United Nations Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (UNESCO) in 1999, our national plan for equal opportunities for men and women 2000-2005, and our Commission for Indigenous Affairs all operate within that ministry.

The indigenous population of the country was consulted in 1998 to find out their vision of the future through 2005 and to hear their proposals about what they themselves could do to realize that vision and what they think that the State should do. In a similar vein, the Government, the corporate sector, non-governmental organizations, grass-roots communities and donors have undertaken a process of dialogue on experiences and challenges in the struggle against poverty.

On commitments 9 and 10, I should like to point out that in accordance with the provisions of the 20/20 initiative, we have increased the resources allocated for basic social expenditures, which now stand at around $80 per person, compared with $12 in 1990. Peru has thus been complying by allocating far more than 20 per cent of its budget to meet the population's basic needs.

Our task for the near future is to place the accent on identifying and developing opportunities that will allow the poorest Peruvians to become part of the market economy and to be control their own future: a future based on economic stability, social peace and development opportunities.

Finally, as pointed out by President Alberto Fujimori, the way in which globalization is affecting countries with undeveloped economies reflects the extent to which that process is essentially not uniformly global, but is rather taking place within a system of imbalances and discord that we should have left behind. The success of poverty-eradication programmes depends on the creation of a fairer world order, the establishment of a truly free global economy with access to developed-country markets, and the adoption of international regulations that will permit a sound relationship among financial markets.

The Acting President: I wish to remind delegations of the time limit of seven minutes for statements, which was established with a view to completing our work in a timely manner.

I call next on His Excellency Mr. Eiki Nestor, Minister for Social Affairs of Estonia.

Mr. Nestor (Estonia): It is a great honour for me to speak on behalf of the Estonian Government and to reaffirm our continuing commitment to social development. I also would like to associate Estonia with the speech made by the representative of Portugal on behalf of the European Union and associated countries.

I would like to thank the Secretary-General and the Division for Social Policy and Development for the excellent preparatory work done for this session, and I also wish to thank the Swiss Government for hosting this special session.

The United Nations conference held in Copenhagen in 1995 highlighted the worldwide importance of social development. The key objectives agreed upon in Copenhagen included the eradication of absolute poverty and the achievement of full employment.

At the time of the Copenhagen Conference, Estonia had already begun its transition to a market economy. Key structural changes taking place in the 1990s were the fall of the agricultural sector and heavy industries and a rapid growth of the service sector and new technology industries. As a result, the structure of the Estonian economy is now similar to that of developed countries.

The rapid development of information technology, which started with economic restructuring, has had a considerable impact on our labour market; it means that there is a high demand for qualified specialists and skilled workers. A reform of state vocational education institutions began in 1995 and aimed at providing young people and adults with an opportunity to obtain knowledge and skills that employers need.

Equipping schools with computers and teaching information technology is one of the priorities of education. Today, 60 per cent of Estonian pupils and students use the Internet every day. We expect the share of high-tech industries to increase remarkably in the Estonian economy.

The Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs has taken an active part in developing labour market policy and resolving employment problems, as long-term unemployment and unemployment of young people rank among some of the most serious social problems in Estonia. In 1999 the Employment and Training Chapter was prepared for the National Development Plan. One of its most important principles was to focus more on the implementation of active labour market measures and to increase the number of people involved. Special attention is being paid to the need to increase the role of social partners in solving employment problems and promoting cooperation between employment offices, training providers and employers.

As outlined in the National Development Plan, the objectives in the field of employment and training are the following: first, to increase the flexibility of the educational system and to strengthen its capacity to adapt to changes reshaping educational, social and economic sectors; secondly, to create conditions for employers and workers to acquire new skills and the knowledge necessary for coping with employment-specific, structural and technological changes; thirdly, to integrate persons in risk groups into the labour market and to ensure their access to education; and, lastly, to guarantee equal opportunities for men and women in employment.

Taking into account the European Union Employment Strategy, Estonia has prepared its first annual Employment Action Plan, which will be the basis for developing national labour market policies and for coordinating cooperation of various ministries to solve employment problems. Estonia will continue to develop labour market policies on the basis of economic and labour market analyses and forecasts, involving in this process all relevant institutions at the national and regional levels.

In preventing poverty, it is important not only to provide people with jobs, but also to ensure adequate wages. The basic principles of the Estonian national wage policy are provided in labour laws that also provide employees with minimum guarantees. The establishment of more favourable wage conditions is permitted in collective agreements and employment contracts and upon the employer's decision.

Since the beginning of 1991 the minimum wage level has been fixed with a tripartite agreement between the State, employers and trade unions. Tripartite agreements are signed every year, and the society has approved the procedure. Today, trade unions and employers' organizations are involved in solving different problems related to employment and to the labour market, both at the central and local levels. In order to involve the local initiative and make the local stakeholders responsible for solving local employment problems, tripartite employment councils have been formed in the counties.

Since 1995, unemployment benefits have been paid to those unemployed who are registered in a State employment office. As the unemployment benefit is small, the unemployed still face a considerable poverty risk. In 1999 the Government of Estonia approved the concept of unemployment insurance, and this system will be built up this year.

Estonia's population is rapidly ageing. Without reforming the existing pension system, growth in the

number of pensioners will lead either to a fall of the pensions-to-wages ratio or will force an increase in public funding. Such a situation may widen the gap between public expectations and the reality.

According to the pension reform concept, Estonia will establish a pension system consisting of three pillars. The first pillar is a State-managed compulsory pay-as-you-go pension scheme. The second pillar is a privately managed pension scheme, preserving the current pension-to-wage ratio and ensuring the growing purchasing power of pensions. The third pillar is a privately managed voluntary funded pension scheme.

Persons whose income, together with wages and social security benefits, remains below the Government-set level are receiving a subsistence benefit. This type of benefit is funded from the State budget and paid out by local governments.

In 1998-1999 the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Estonian Ministry of Social Affairs and the University of Tartu carried out a joint project entitled the "Elaboration of a National Strategy for Poverty Alleviation in Estonia", highlighting the fact that poverty is one of the most serious social problems restricting social development.

Estonia was the first applicant country to the European Union to start the ratification of the European Code of Social Security. Our Government signed the Code in the fall of last year, and we will ratify the document next year. On 31 May of this year, the Estonian Parliament ratified the Revised European Social Charter.

The Estonian Government takes a serious attitude towards social development issues; our aim is a well-functioning, all-inclusive civil society.

The Acting President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Soubanh Srithirath, Minister to the Office of the President of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, to take the floor.

Mr. Srithirath (Lao People's Democratic Republic): At the outset, my delegation wishes to extend our warmest congratulations to the President for presiding over this important special session of the General Assembly and to express our conviction that under his wise leadership this session will be crowned with success.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action represent a new international consensus on the need to address the core social issues. Since their adoption, major steps at national, regional and international levels have been taken towards the realization of the goals. So far, initial achievements have been recorded.

However, we are witnessing the negative impact and an unfavourable environment in the five-year process of its implementation. For example, the resources allocated for social development have declined; the external debt burden has grown; and with the liberalization of capital flows, the world has become more vulnerable to sudden financial shocks that have severe social and economic consequences. All this has caused serious impediments on the way to achieving social development.

My delegation fully shares the view expressed by many representatives that the world has become a more unequal place, both within and between nations, with increasing inequality in income, employment, access to social services and opportunities for participation in public and civil society institutions. Globalization has also posed major challenges for the developing countries, particularly the least developed ones.

In the light of the aforementioned, the international community, particularly the United Nations, has a crucial and coordinating role to play in order to solve this problem, to mobilize financial resources and to provide technical assistance to the developing countries, especially the least developed and landlocked developing countries.

The consensus reached at the World Summit on Social Development is indeed the implicit objective of the Lao Government's socio-economic development programmes, which are aimed at improving the well-being of people, providing social services and gradually reducing poverty. All efforts have been made towards their implementation. Since 1996, the Government's budget allocation to the social sector has increased from 11 per cent to 19 per cent.

Encouraging achievements have been made. From 1993 to 1998 the rate of poverty has fallen from 46 per cent to 39 per cent. In addition, there has been some significant progress in education and health; the primary school attendance rate increased to 76 per cent in 1999; the mortality rate for infants under one year has dropped from 125 per 1,000 births to 113 per 1,000

births, and mortality of children under the age of five has dropped from 182 per 1,000 to 142 per 1,000.

Public health care has expanded in recent years at both the village and district levels throughout the country. The immunization programme has been expanded to most villages. New programmes for maternal health and safe motherhood have been established. AIDS control and prevention have been given adequate attention.

Despite the significant achievements in education and health, we still continue to face other major difficulties closely linked to poverty alleviation, the transition to a market-driven economy, the consistent building-up of basic infrastructure and capacity-building.

People's living standards in the rural areas are one of our great concerns. For this reason, the Lao Government has set up the rural development and food production programmes, the objectives of which are to promote market-oriented production, diversify agriculture and provide access to the market and basic social services. For the first time, the paddy production output of 2.1 million tons in 1999 has rendered the country self-sufficient in foodstuffs. Furthermore, women and multi-ethnic minority groups are also our main target groups for fair treatment to enable them to become fully integrated into society and reap the benefits of economic opportunities.

As a result of high inflation and depreciation of our national currency stemming from the Asian financial crisis, the Lao People's Democratic Republic has experienced negative effects of macroeconomic instability, which has been a major handicap in our attempts to increase social expenditure and to address unemployment issues. Presently, the situation on all fronts is becoming stable.

In order to deepen the dialogue on our development policies and strategies, especially poverty eradication, the Lao Government has launched a round-table process 2000-2002 to persuade our development partners of our needs, development coherence and priorities. The dialogue also aims at optimizing resource mobilization and developing a shared and transparent framework of cooperation with our partners in reaching the goal of changing the country's status as one of the least developed countries.

In this context, I would like to take this opportunity to express our deeply felt gratitude to the international and donor community for their continued support for our development. Their valuable support has indeed been a significant complementary factor of national efforts to achieve progress.

In concluding, while the primary responsibility of realizing the Copenhagen commitments lies with national Governments, international cooperation and assistance, particularly in the area of finance, are essential to fully and successfully implementing these commitments. The Lao People's Democratic Republic, for its part, will continue to exert all efforts to contribute to the process of translating the lofty goals of the Copenhagen Summit into action.

The Acting President: I call on Her Excellency Mrs. Kadi Sesay, Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone.

Mrs. Sesay (Sierra Leone): My delegation wishes to express profound gratitude to the Government and people of Switzerland for their gracious and warm hospitality in their beautiful city.

Like many speakers before me, the Sierra Leone delegation agrees that there has been some progress towards achieving the commitments set out five years ago. But a lot remains to be done. As we observe advances in some areas, we particularly note setbacks and indeed deterioration in others. Growing national economic difficulties, exacerbated by global financial crisis and civil conflicts in many parts of the world, have inhibited the fulfilment of the Copenhagen commitments in many countries, Sierra Leone being one of them.

But I stand in this historic building, in such an august Assembly, with a sense of pride inspired by the indefatigable will of the people of Sierra Leone to stand firm against the forces of evil, anarchy and brutality that have for nine years fought to completely destroy the nation called Sierra Leone, its infrastructure and institutions. To quote our President, Mr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah,

> "we have resisted attempts by an inhuman alliance of local, regional and international vested interests to exploit our natural resources in exchange for weapons of mass destruction to wage war against the people of Sierra Leone".

We welcome the initiative taken by Great Britain to submit to the Security Council a draft resolution against the illegal and immoral trade in Sierra Leone diamonds by the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) rebels and their external accomplices — a trade that has for many years fuelled their barbaric and inhuman atrocities against the innocent and peaceful citizens of Sierra Leone. Our hope is that the Security Council will speedily expedite this draft resolution's adoption.

The cost in human life, suffering and destruction is unspeakable; the extensive nature and intensity of human rights violations, especially against innocent women and children are unparalleled. The present initiative by the United States, supported by Britain, to submit a draft resolution for the establishment of a special tribunal to try rebel leader Foday Sankoh and his cohorts for war crimes in Sierra Leone, so as to address the issue of impunity, is highly commendable.

The continuous insecurity has frustrated the efforts of the Sierra Leone Government to stabilize the economy and create a sustainable environment for social development. The safety and security of life and property of Sierra Leoneans therefore remains a high priority, as the armed forces of Sierra Leone strive to consolidate the Government's authority, until every inch of Sierra Leonean soil is completely liberated. So for Sierra Leone, the maintenance of law and order, the protection of the life and property of the citizens and the control of the integrity of Sierra Leone as a nation are prerequisites for the implementation of the great ideals of the Copenhagen Declaration.

For there can be no socio-economic development if a people is not free and safe. There can be no poverty alleviation if a nation is steeped in civil conflict. In fact, as poverty has been seen to be a cause of many conflicts in Africa, any sustainable solutions to these conflicts must begin and end with addressing the causes of poverty.

The contraction of economic activities and the fact that rebels continue to hold on to the mining and agriculturally productive areas of the country have contributed to undermining the Government's earning capacity, with an attendant decline in social expenditures. This in turn has reduced Sierra Leonean citizens' access to social services: education, health, shelter, water and sanitation. All of this is occurring in a country with an unprecedented number of amputees who can no longer fend for themselves and their families.

Sierra Leone therefore welcomes the current World Bank/International Monetary Fund initiatives for country-owned poverty reduction strategy papers leading to concessional lending through the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility and linked with the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative, launched in 1996 with the aim of helping relieve the debt burden of the poorest countries that are committed to fighting poverty and pursuing economic reform programmes.

Sierra Leone, however, wishes to warn that the processes for qualifying for debt relief are too complicated and too slow. The process must be fast-tracked and extended to all developing countries. For unless we tackle the debt burden through full debt cancellation, and use those resources for poverty reduction programmes, most of our countries will continue to wallow in poverty and stagnant economies. Accordingly, Sierra Leone is now in the process of producing its national poverty reduction strategy paper, which will go to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility by the end of the year.

The widespread damage to the social fabric and economic infrastructure has particularly affected women, children and the aged. It is the Government's intention to provide community-based support services for the benefit of war victims, in particular to promote the demobilization and reintegration of child soldiers and to help the highly traumatized, the amputees and sexually abused women and girls. The Government has now begun instituting a social security scheme as a social safety net that will provide support to the most vulnerable members of our community. Several microcredit schemes particularly focusing on women are being run by the Government and several non-governmental organizations. Various programmes aimed at improving access to preventive and basic health-care services and safe drinking water nationwide are being formulated or are already in progress.

Sierra Leone currently receives some resources from both Governments and other international donors for the implementation of various programmes. But in order to ensure that these resources, which are aimed at improving the condition of the poor, reach their target beneficiaries, the Government is currently putting in place an aid coordination mechanism for the effective

mobilization, utilization and management of aid flows in order to alleviate poverty.

The progress of any nation is symbolized by the status of its women, who not only constitute the majority of its citizens, but are the pillars of all societies. Gender equality and the empowerment of women therefore become an imperative. Sierra Leonean women have entered the annals of history for their bold and unflinching stand for democracy. They did this first in 1996 by demonstrating against and removing the military junta and, that same year, by bringing into being the democratically elected Government of Mr. Ahmad Tejan Kabbah. Then, on 6 May 2000, these fearless women again stood up against the RUF rebels who were refusing to disarm, in violation of the Lomé Peace Agreement. This culminated in the 8 May civil society protests that led to the eventual capture of the rebel leader and his cohorts. This is to the credit of Sierra Leone and of Sierra Leonean women in particular. However, even though women are such vocal members of civil society, they need to be given more opportunity to hold more top decision-making positions.

The immediate way forward for Africa is for concerted efforts by the world community to address the root causes of conflict in our continent and to provide timely interventions to put out the fires of conflict and stop them from becoming unmanageable. Moreover, the international community must encourage and provide the necessary support so that countries with emerging democracies can consolidate democracy, good governance and respect for human rights and the rule of law.

Unless this is done, all the ideals of Copenhagen + 5 and Beijing + 5 will be meaningless. For without security and peace there will be no socio-economic development.

In conclusion, on behalf of the Government and the people of Sierra Leone, I wish sincerely to thank all friendly countries — especially Great Britain, the United States of America, Germany and Canada — and the multilateral agencies, especially the European Union, the United Nations and its humanitarian agencies, for their invaluable support, which has helped to sustain Sierra Leone during nine years of brutal war.

But I believe special thanks must go to our brothers in the subregion as members of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), especially the troop-contributing countries — Nigeria, Guinea, Ghana and Mali. And let us not forget the United Nations peacekeeping force troop-contributing countries, some of whose citizens lost their lives so that Sierra Leoneans might live in peace.

The Acting President: I give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Nana Aicha Foumakoye, Minister of Social Development, Population, Advancement of Women and Child Protection of the Niger.

Mrs. Foumakoye (Niger) (*spoke in French*): I should like first of all to perform a pleasant duty: to convey to you, Mr. President, and to all of the members of the Bureau my most heartfelt congratulations. I should like also to extend the warm greetings of Mr. Tandja Mamadou, President of the Republic of the Niger, and of the Government, to all participants here.

My country participated in the Copenhagen World Summit on Social Development in March 1995. The commitments that emerged from this important forum, which were aimed, inter alia, at fighting poverty, promoting productive employment and increasing social integration fully reflect the concerns of the Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world.

In recent years, the socio-economic situation of my country has worsened significantly, resulting in an unprecedented deterioration in the standard of living of almost all segments of our society. These setbacks can be attributed, inter alia, to a harsh natural environment, inadequate economic policies, recurring droughts and the low level of development of social sectors. The situation is also the result of a growing informal sector in our economy and of the chronic political instability that prevailed in our country from 1990 to 1999.

It is clear that major challenges remain to be met with respect to the Niger's socio-economic situation. For that reason, Niger has, since the Copenhagen Summit, devised strategies and undertaken various activities aimed at implementing the recommendations emanating from the Summit. Those activities range from developing programmes and policies to the adoption of concrete measures for their effective implementation.

The Niger has put together a national framework programme to fight poverty and a national social development policy. Following the round table on poverty held here in March 1998 between the Niger

and its principal development partners, the programme to fight poverty — which aims in the short and medium term to reduce that scourge and in the long term to eradicate it — was launched upon finalization of the institutional setup, which consists of a national steering committee, a programme management unit and a technical follow-up committee. Indeed, a number of projects are being implemented in several areas of our country thanks to the assistance of our development partners.

The national social development policy, for its part, above and beyond the fight against poverty, aims to achieve two major goals: first, to strengthen social integration, and secondly, to promote social justice and equity. A major step forward was taken recently with respect to the second objective with the Niger's ratification in August 1999 of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, and with the adoption in May 2000 of legislation introducing a quota system benefiting women.

The social development policy incorporates the following sectoral policies: social promotion and protection, population, promotion of women and protection of children. A five-year plan of action is also currently being finalized following a consultative process.

In the area of job creation, the actions taken have been mainly of an institutional nature.

Concerning resource allocation, 30 per cent of public expenditure is devoted to the social sector, with 15 per cent going to essential social services, for which 12 per cent of official development assistance is earmarked.

I believe that the results achieved to date, although modest, are heartening. Overall, the poverty development index dropped from 66 in 1994 to 64 in 1997.

In the Niger we are fully aware of the fact that the modest progress that has been made can be maintained and consolidated only if consistent and vigorous action is taken to ensure good governance and the continued strengthening of managerial capacities in our national economy.

In this framework, following the legislative and presidential elections of November 1999, our Republic's institutions are striving to consolidate peace and democracy, which is the most effective way of combating poverty. Local elections will be held soon and will complete the democratization process, which has gotten under way in so promising a manner.

Let me also mention that peace has been re-established in the north and east of our country, and that we have established a national human rights commission and a national commission for social dialogue. Likewise, I should like to point out that civil society is fully involved in all development activities and decision-making processes.

Nonetheless, manifold and significant constraints still exist. In order to try to deal with these constraints and to try to live up the commitments that emanated from the Copenhagen Summit, the Niger joins its voice to those of previous speakers to put forward some proposals and suggestions for new initiatives.

At the national level, improved follow-up of the 20/20 Initiative is required with a view to mobilizing the resources required for financing social services; the poverty-reduction strategy should be integrated into the macro-economic framework to ensure sustainable human development; increased responsibility should be given at the grass-roots level through a decentralization process; there should be increased concertation between the various actors involved in social development in order to enhance coordination of activities and ensure a sounder use of resources; strong support should be given to the private sector by building the capacities of key players; and emphasis should be placed on the development of human resources, specifically of women.

At the international level, the international community must evince greater solidarity with developing countries in their fight against poverty. Debt should be cancelled or converted into social-sector assistance, and official development assistance should be greatly increased. In that connection, it is time that my country — whose level of public finance is extremely low and which has no prospect of immediate recovery — benefited from the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative. Economic data and more information about wages must be made available as soon as possible, because these areas pose a serious challenge to our public finance system.

Despite all the problems it is facing, the Government of the Republic of Niger reaffirms its determination to pursue the implementation of the

recommendations adopted at the World Summit for Social Development. It reaffirms its commitment to continue dialogue with all its development partners, with the needed transparency and greater rigour in decision-making and in the allocation of public resources. In that connection, the authorities of the Fifth Republic have decided to add dynamism and vigour to their guidance of how development is managed. To that end, the imminent formulation of a national social and economic development plan for the period 2000 to 2004, which will amalgamate all current programmes and policies, will provide a general frame of reference for future action.

Let me conclude by recalling the words of an eminent individual, who said that if economic matters overtake or turn their back on social issues, the social conditions of tomorrow, having been undermined, will paralyse economic progress.

The Acting President: I call next on Her Excellency Mrs. Jeanne Dambendzet, Minister of Civil Service, Administrative Reform and Advancement of Women of the Congo.

Mrs. Dambendzet (Congo) (*spoke in French*): At New York just a few weeks ago, from 5 to 9 June 2000, the General Assembly held a special session on women, to review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action five years on. Now, since 26 June, here at Geneva, the Assembly has been meeting to review the implementation of the 10 commitments adopted by Member States at the Copenhagen World Summit for Social Development. The goal of those 10 commitments was to combat poverty and to eradicate extreme poverty. What is the situation five years after Copenhagen?

In the light of the report of the Preparatory Committee for the present session — the high quality and relevance of whose deliberations we commend — we should acknowledge that, despite progress in certain countries, many of the important commitments that were adopted have not, unfortunately, been fulfilled. The Declaration and Programme of Action therefore remain timely. The international community must be mobilized; it must be truly determined to redefine its approach and find new means to respond to the expectations of the millions of individuals who believe in it. I would add that we need genuine political will with an underpinning of greater and more active solidarity with the poor.

Besides stating the facts and identifying the problems facing mankind, and besides the great challenges that must be confronted to bring about social development, the international community should join together to create a new awareness that can lead to a rejection of the shame that is poverty, the degrading, dehumanizing poverty in which the majority of the world's population stagnates — while at the same time colossal financial, material and technological wealth is spent to less human ends.

Five years ago, the Copenhagen Summit was a high point of dialogue and cooperation, which certainly attested to the determination of world decision-makers to work to bring about social development and to combat poverty taking into account the cultures and conditions prevailing in each State. Those were the stakes embodied in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, which gave rise to high hopes among countless individuals.

But do we feel today that we have accomplished our mission? Far too many outside factors have destroyed so many poor countries' efforts to implement the 10 commitments and to move towards sustainable social development. Indeed, the implementation of national plans that had offered hope in the health, education, employment and social-integration spheres continues to be thwarted by many obstacles. Those obstacles have been put in place by debt servicing, the continuing decline in official development assistance, protectionism in many forms, and the creation of false values that tempt young people in the absence of any true culture — in short, obstacles that constitute a vise from whose grip no attempt at a solution has succeeded in releasing us.

That is why, while we welcome such measures as the 1999 Cologne initiative on debt relief for heavily indebted poor countries, the Congo urges the international community to work towards the outright cancellation of such debt: the conditionalities that are part of the Cologne initiative make it deceptive and raise questions about it. Likewise, although it is now clear that, because of what is at stake, globalization is the principal challenge of the twenty-first century, hesitation persists because globalization involves threats to the sovereignty and the cultural and historical uniqueness of weaker States, and raises serious questions about the development prospects of the poorest among them.

More than ever before, there must be prior consideration of appropriate ways to ensure that globalization will meet our hopes for the development of peoples in unity and interdependence, so that it does not become a nightmare for the weakest, as happened with the insistence on democracy. Hence, to minimize its negative impact, we must define the moral principles and ethical issues that are raised by economic globalization. For example, can we ensure that women in rural areas have jobs and income-generating activities in the face of large-scale agri-business?

Other constraints on social development were also identified by the Preparatory Committee: civil wars, non-application of principles of democracy and good governance, non-respect for human rights, violence and discrimination of all kinds, social disunity, et cetera.

Here, let me touch on the situation in my own country. In 1995, at the time of the Copenhagen Summit, the Congo had been living in democracy since 1991, when the Congolese people opted for a return to political pluralism, to respect for the rule of law, and to good governance. It was because this was not internalized that civil wars, with their attendant disastrous human and material consequences, have tormented Congo since 1993. Those wars destroyed the economic and social fabric of our country.

To restore daily life in our country, particularly in Brazzaville, and to re-establish a minimum level of social infrastructures, the Government established a 100-day emergency reconstruction programme in November 1997. The priority activities of that programme, which cost about 10 billion CFA francs, included the following: re-establishing the safety and peace of the people; re-establishing electricity, water and telephone networks; re-establishing national radio and television; rebuilding local administrative facilities and public equipment; cleaning up the city of Brazzaville in order to prevent epidemics; re-opening schools and hospitals; and establishing an agreed framework of reference with our development partners. On behalf of my Government, I would like to thank everyone in the international community who gave us support.

In order to continue with these activities and to accelerate the reforms already launched to allow the country to combat poverty and to promote social development, the Government has established a strategic tool for economic and social policy. I am speaking of the interim post-conflict programme for 2000-2002. This program, which will cost 511 billion CFA francs, has been designed to start the real transition from the crisis management phase which our country has undergone to the phase of growth and sustainable development.

Moreover, the Government has been working, within the framework of its fight against poverty, to re-establish essential services in the areas of health and primary health care, basic education, sanitation and the rebuilding of our judiciary for the promotion and protection of human rights. The participation of the private sector in these activities has been backed by a pilot programme which directs external assistance towards non-governmental organizations and other community organizations.

Turning to employment policy, the establishment of the Congolese Job Fund, which is a privately managed institution specializing in job promotion, will promote training activities and financing for specific programmes, as well as self-employment projects and micro-enterprise initiatives. In addition, a young people's job fund has just been established by a specific law.

The objectives of the World Summit for Social Development and beyond — achieving social development for all in a globalizing world — can be realized in developing countries only if the following dynamic measures are taken first: remove the cumbersome, lengthy and constraining procedures of the European Union so as to release financing due to States, cancel the debt, increase development assistance and ensure a real technology transfer.

It is premature at present to try to assess the future effects of globalization on development. However, it is necessary to strengthen international cooperation and solidarity to allow access for all to the global village, through mastering new technology, the cost of which must take into account the financial situation of beneficiary countries. To act in any other way would only increase the inequality that is so strongly disparaged and would fuel doubts about the ability of the international community to promote the noble ideals contained in the Charter of our universal Organization.

Social development continues to be dependent on an environment where peace and security guarantee the expression of democracy and the protection and promotion of human rights. It is for all of these aims that the Government and the Congolese people, under the strong vision and leadership of President Nguesso, are devoting every effort.

I could not conclude my statement without congratulating the President, as well as the entire Bureau, for the way in which our debate has been guided. My congratulations also go to those who have organized these meetings. I would like to join previous speakers in thanking the authorities and people of Switzerland for our warm welcome here.

The Acting President: I now invite His Excellency Mr. Girma Birru, Minister for Economic Development and Cooperation of Ethiopia, to take the floor.

Mr. Birru (Ethiopia): Please permit me at the outset to express my delegation's appreciation to the President for the excellent manner in which he has conducted the work of this special session of the General Assembly on the World Social Summit and beyond, to which we attach paramount importance.

We are confident that this session will come up with concrete and comprehensive actions and initiatives to fully implement the commitments made at the Copenhagen World Social Summit. We believe that our collective commitment and shared responsibility can serve as our anchor for present and future international economic cooperation, and we place a particular premium on it as we confront the challenges of poverty, unemployment and social exclusion.

We are convinced that the agenda for social development provides a useful framework to undertake, in an integrated fashion, the international policies, programmes and plans of actions on social development which have been adopted at different forums by the international community.

External debt continues to be a serious obstacle to social development. In the case of Africa, the stock of external debt and its servicing has continued to drain our major foreign exchange earnings, while eroding Africa's creditworthiness. In light of already grim resource flows caused by declines in official development assistance, the crippling burden of international debt has seriously hampered social development prospects for most of our countries. The situation of the least developed countries is more precarious.

It is obvious, therefore, that, unless there is a swift and substantial effort to relieve the debt burden, we can never invest adequately to enhance our capacity for social development and our competitiveness in a liberalizing international trade. For social development efforts to bear fruit and economic reforms to succeed in our countries, all creditor nations and multilateral financial institutions should adopt concrete measures, including debt cancellation, by going beyond debt rescheduling and the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative.

It is the conviction of my delegation that each of our countries, including those in Africa, must take charge of its own comprehensive social development. The call on the international community to do the maximum possible for Africa in the economic area is an appeal to help remove the obstacles hindering the social development of the continent so that Africa can progress through the efforts of its own people.

The continued socio-economic decline in the least developed countries generally has been a source of grave concern. This is evidenced by the alarming increase in the number of people living in absolute poverty, economic decline, or stagnation. This dismal deteriorating situation is compounded further by lack of resource flows, dwindling direct foreign investment, reduction in export earnings, the excruciating debt crisis, rising unemployment — especially among the youth — and environmental degradation.

The persistence of these problems could easily undermine the stability of the world economy and pose serious threats to international peace and security. Immeasurable work has been done to redress the economic situation in which most of our countries find themselves. A lot more, however, needs to be done by the developed countries and the international financial institutions to extricate many of the world's poor countries from being completely submerged by the heavy burdens imposed by the present unfavourable international economic system. More specifically, new additional resources, at both multilateral and bilateral levels, need to be provided by our development partners if any improvement in the lives of the teeming millions in the developing countries is to be assured.

While referring to the social development crisis in developing countries, particularly in Africa, I cannot but make some brief remarks about the situation in my own country.

Human and social conditions in Ethiopia prior to the Social Summit were typically characterized by a marked deterioration in the living conditions of the people. The confluence of factors such as bad governance and ill-designed economic and social policies of the then Government, protracted civil war that lasted for nearly 30 years and drought were the causes that led to the unacceptably low level of human and social development. A major segment of the population was deprived of the bare minimum necessities of life. In the past, the social sector was neglected and perceived as being secondary, parasitic and dependent on other sectors rather than being the source of productivity and strategic input to the economic sector. Consequently, the sector was not the beneficiary of a fair share of the budget allocation and institutional innovation.

Stabilizing and reviving the economy and improving the living conditions of the people were, therefore, the priority objectives of my Government. Poverty reduction has consequently been the utmost preoccupation of the Government, even since long before the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development. The economic policy of Ethiopia adopted in 1991 unambiguously reflects that the overriding priority is poverty reduction, while promoting social justice and equity.

In terms of creating an enabling environment to implement the agreed commitments, the Government has put in place relevant development policies and strategies. Based on the macro frameworks, sectoral policies and strategies were designed, and implementation has been started in priority sectors. Policies in the areas of population, health, education, women, employment and HIV/AIDS have been formulated and adopted. The Constitution embodying the core values and beliefs of Ethiopians has been adopted, and the first and second multiparty elections were held in 1995 and 2000, respectively.

Our efforts have produced tangible results, although much remains to be done. The delivery and coverage of social services in health and education have shown remarkable improvement and expansion. Health service coverage has increased by about 10 per cent, while the enrolment rates has increased in primary and secondary education by 20 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively. The participation rate of girls has also increased at all levels of schooling. The share of social services increased from about 25 per cent to 28 per cent in recurrent expenditure and from about 20 per cent to 23 per cent in capital expenditure between 1995 and 1998. The real per capita expenditure on social services as a whole has increased over the past seven years. More importantly, our defence expenditure was dramatically reduced, from an average of 65 per cent of the total Government expenditure in the 1980s to less than 5 per cent in 1997, shortly before the Eritrean war of aggression.

One of the most successful innovative approaches adopted to fund the social sector in Ethiopia has been the formulation and implementation of sector-wide programmes. Ethiopia, with the support of its development partners, has formulated education and health sector development programmes with an investment capital of $1.5 billion and $0.63 billion, respectively, over five years. These programmes are the first real opportunities to implement the Government's social policies and strategies. The implementation of these programmes calls for an increase in resources and a radical shift in resource allocation within each sector. The Government is already committed to financing about 70 per cent of the programme costs from its own sources, and the commitment is being realized in practice despite the tight budgetary constraints.

While vast opportunities exist for development, Ethiopia is confronted with enormous challenges as well. Some 45.5 percent of its 60 million people still live in absolute poverty. The recurrence of drought has been a norm rather than a risk, and currently up to 10million people are threatened by famine. Environmental degradation accompanied by population pressure has weakened the resource base upon which sustainable development depends. There is a need to rehabilitate hundreds of thousands of displaced people due to Eritrea's recent war of aggression. The unsustainably high level of external debt is also a crushing burden on an economy like Ethiopia's, and high debt-servicing requirements prevent us from making adequate investment in education and health care and from responding effectively to emergencies. The continued decline in official development assistance, continued dependence on a single commodity for export earnings and the absence of

meaningful market access for the main export items of the country are factors undermining the overall development prospects of the country.

In conclusion, while looking forward to the full implementation of the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action, we remain committed to continuing our endeavours on all fronts to fulfil the aspirations of our people for their social well-being, prosperity and security.

The Acting President: I call on His Excellency the Honourable Norwood Langley, Vice-Minister for Planning and Economic Affairs of Liberia.

Mr. Langley (Liberia): Liberia is grateful for this opportunity to participate in this gathering of stakeholders, this special session of the General Assembly entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

I should hasten to note that the past five days of discourse by the presenters before me have adequately platformed the realities of a new and highly potent revolution; a revolution which will change the way we live, work, play, organize our societies and, ultimately, define ourselves. This revolution is globalization.

Achieving social development for all in a globalizing world, in my opinion, is indeed an appropriate theme for special session, and I salute the Swiss Government and the United Nations organizers.

I am honoured to be here and will speak to the concerns of post-conflict least developed countries. Half a decade has elapsed since we gathered in a similar fashion in Copenhagen to lay out a global social development agenda. Following deliberations at the Summit, the international community agreed on 10 commitments to serve as guideposts in identifying solutions to the problems of poverty, unemployment, social disintegration and so forth. Now, at this session of the General Assembly, we are undertaking an assessment of the progress achieved thus far and of the drawbacks and constraints which have stood as obstacles to full implementation of the Summit's goals.

During the preparatory process for this session, it was realized that most Governments, especially those of developing countries, are still unable to meet the basic needs of their citizens. Poverty, illiteracy and treatable diseases abound. In some countries hunger and famine have led to malnutrition and numerous deaths. Internal conflicts contribute to these appalling conditions for millions. Declining terms of trade, increasing external debts, a reduction in official development assistance and stringent structural adjustment programmes which do not consider social implications worsen the situation. In addition, the forces of globalization, while presenting many opportunities, carry considerable risks. Unfair trade practices, unequal technological know-how and low prices for the agricultural commodities on which most least developed countries depend are factors that impede the social progress of least developed countries.

My country, Liberia, has not been able to record significant success in meeting the social development agenda, principally because of the decade-long civil conflict that raged during the 1990s. All institutions that addressed social needs and dispensed social services were devastated. Three years after the war, the duly elected Government has the Herculean task of restoring the pre-war level of basic health services, schools and food distribution. There are the added problems of rehabilitating ex-combatants and reintegrating them into civil society with newly acquired skills to enable them to live productive lives. In order to address these problems, the Government of Liberia has endeavoured to establish an environment of durable peace conducive to revitalizing the national economy. However, the post-conflict situation requires an infusion of financial assistance to jump-start the process. Unfortunately, such assistance is in woefully short supply.

The Government has made numerous appeals for international assistance only to be lectured about human rights, which seem to exclude the most basic right of sustenance, the right to have adequate meals and good health. Nevertheless, the Government of Liberia continues to engage international donors and its partners in development to help revive the economy as a basis for setting and implementing a social development agenda that accords with the 10 commitments made at the Copenhagen Summit.

Our deliberations have considered all the dimensions and constraints that have prevented countries, both developed and developing, from meeting the socio-economic needs of our people. For developing countries to improve their capacity they require increased development assistance, equitable terms of trade, debt cancellation and reduction, and

structural adjustment programmes tailored to the specific needs and circumstances of individual countries. This will enable them to utilize their meagre budgetary resources for people-centred projects.

We have set the year 2015 as the target date to significantly reduce poverty and ameliorate the conditions that result from it. The success achieved by then will depend on how we view ourselves. Continuing to consider the peoples of the world in terms of "they" in the North and "we" in the South can only accentuate the great divide and the unwholesome thoughts that nurture the indifference to long-standing social injustices.

In closing, I wish to note that the human family has come a long way since the United Nations came into being. The new millennium offers the promise for us to give tangible expression to the preambular edict of the United Nations Charter, which mandates us

> "to employ international machinery for the promotion of the economic and social advancement of all peoples".

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Ms. Estelabel Piad Herbruger, Vice-Minister of Youth, Women, Childhood and the Family of Panama.

Ms. Herbruger (Panama) (*spoke in Spanish*): As a representative of the Panamanian Government, which is led by President Mireya Moscoso, I would like to convey her greetings to the representatives gathered here and to the peoples they represent. Let me also take this opportunity to thank the fraternal people of Switzerland and their Government and to say how grateful we are for their generous hospitality and for the kind attention that my delegation has received since its arrival in this prosperous country.

Next November Panama will be hosting the twelfth Ibero-American Summit of heads of State and Government. Its slogan calls for uniting children and adolescents on the basis of justice and equity in the new millennium. That event will be of great importance for the future development of Iberian-American generations, because we will deal with highly significant matters of common interest to our countries.

We are a small country, with 2.8 million inhabitants, of which 60 per cent live in urban areas. Approximately 37.3 per cent of the Panamanian population lives in poverty. The poverty is concentrated in the rural and indigenous areas, where 77 per cent of the poor population lives.

The Government of Panama has made great efforts to reduce poverty, to promote employment and to achieve social integration. It is worth noting that Panama is among the countries in the Latin American region that have devoted the most resources to improving the living conditions of their populations, earmarking approximately 20 per cent of its gross domestic product to public spending in the social field.

Nevertheless, these great efforts have not achieved the desired results due to the inefficiency of social expenditures and the lack of adequate targeting of geographic areas and vulnerable groups. The Government's capacity to invest in social development is limited because the country's high level of indebtedness requires us to earmark 21.8 per cent of the national budget to servicing the public debt.

Among the priority activities for attacking poverty is the implementation of a rural development programme, which, in addition to broadening access to basic social services for rural populations, is reducing their production shortages. As regards the indigenous population, the State considers it essential to base its actions on the needs of that population itself, respecting its identity, values and culture, providing social organization and introducing modern methods of production. To make progress in this process, we have created a National Council for indigenous development, which is made up of representatives of the indigenous population and of the Government.

Among the main objectives of our Government is improving the quality and coverage of health care, which is closely related to the social development of the people. Although 80 per cent of the Panamanian population is estimated to have access to health services, and approximately 90 per cent to have access to drinking water, we are developing programmes to broaden these services in order to achieve a higher level of coverage for the rural and indigenous populations. These people are at a disadvantage by comparison with persons living in urban areas, where more than 95 per cent of the population has access to such services.

Education is one of the most important weapons for combating poverty. In this connection, in recent decades Panama has undertaken significant efforts to

broaden coverage. In recent years its efforts to improve the quality of education have placed it among the Latin American countries that devote a relatively high proportion of their resources to this sector. We have managed to achieve almost total coverage at the primary level; the actual figure is 94.7 per cent coverage. This has had a positive impact on reducing illiteracy, which in the last 30 years has fallen from 25.2 per cent to 7.8 per cent.

One of the greatest concerns of our Government is generating opportunities for productive employment. With 11.6 per cent of the economically active population currently unemployed, our goal is to enable Panamanian families to earn adequate and stable incomes. To address this situation, we have undertaken significant actions to foster private investment and promote growth. We have, among other things, availed ourselves of the enormous potential of the assets of the old Panama Canal Zone by incorporating them into the economy.

To promote social integration and equal opportunity, Panama has undertaken a number of normative measures, notably, our ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the reform of the electoral code that guarantees women the opportunity to hold elective offices; the law regarding opportunities and facilities for handicapped persons; the law that establishes equality of opportunity for women; the law that eliminates sexist language in school books and texts; the law providing a special regime of criminal responsibility for adolescents; and our recent ratification of International Labour Organization Conventions 182 and 138 regarding child labour.

In 1997 we created the Ministry of Youth, Women, Childhood and the Family, the main purposes of which are to foster human development through participation and the promotion of equality. Through the efforts of the Ministry, we have established the National Council for the family and young persons, the National Council for women, the National Council for youth and the National Council for older adults. These are positive steps for the organized participation of civil society.

For the first time in Panama's history, a woman is at the helm of the country. This is the result of the fight waged by the women of our Republic for the right to participate actively in the decision-making process and in the economic, social, cultural and political development of the country.

The Government of Panama recognizes the family as the basic unit of society and the fact that it plays a fundamental role in development, in addition to being an essential factor in bringing about social integration. In this respect, we have implemented policies and programmes to strengthen the capacity of the family to perform its social functions and to assist the development process. We are placing emphasis on the welfare of children and women, family values and education as important tools for achieving social development.

To sum up, the Republic of Panama faces the same development problems as other countries in the region. Nevertheless, it is classified by international organizations as an upper middle-income country, which limits its access to benefits from international donors. This is due to the fact that in the classification process account was taken of per capita income and national indicators, which mask the enormous disparities and inequities not only between regions but also between population groups.

The Government would like at this point to make several recommendations aimed at promoting social development worldwide. In this respect we suggest that participatory assessments be carried out on the social impact of structural adjustments in each country, and that this exercise include the United Nations agencies, Governments and civil society, so as to adapt economic reform strategies to economic realities. We must also appeal to the international community to redouble its efforts to give support to the most vulnerable countries in a spirit of international social justice and genuine human solidarity.

In conclusion, it is important to underscore the fact that Panama reaffirms its commitment to the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action and to the new measures to be adopted at this special session of the General Assembly. Panama reiterates its support for efforts to enhance existing policies on children, adolescents, the environment and equal opportunity, as well as for the goals that have been set to ensure a better quality of life for the peoples of Latin America and the world.

The Acting President: I give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Gerbert Betancourt, Vice-Minister of Public Health and Social Welfare of El Salvador.

Mr. Betancourt (El Salvador) (*spoke in Spanish*): I should like to convey, on behalf of the Government of El Salvador, our sincere congratulations on the election of Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab, as well as on that of the other members of the Bureau, to conduct the proceedings of this twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly, entitled "World Summit for Social Development and beyond: achieving social development for all in a globalizing world".

We are gathered here at this special session to review the progress made in the field of social development and to renew our commitments, motivated by the conviction that all countries present have been working in the spirit of the commitments we have entered into.

The realities of the past five years have been characterized by difficulties in the area of international finance and in trade relations between countries, as well as by problems resulting from the impact of natural disasters and international cooperation flows, all of which have limited progress towards the social goals set at Copenhagen.

However, El Salvador has continued to work to enhance its ability to provide for the social needs of the most vulnerable sectors of our population.

The implementation of the 1992 Peace Agreement made El Salvador one of the most successful examples of conflict resolution through understanding. This laid the foundation for a democratic, participatory, integrated and pluralistic coexistence, which created conditions conducive to progress in the implementation of the commitments undertaken in the field of social development.

In the framework of the Social Summit, the progress achieved by El Salvador can be summed up as follows.

In 1995 we began a process of educational reform that was defined and implemented through the broad participation of the citizenry. At present there are approximately 5,000 organizations in El Salvador, consisting of parents, students and teachers, who constitute school governing bodies.

Through the Educo programme, ranked number one in the world by the World Bank, we are addressing the needs of children in the poorest rural areas of the country. This programme makes it possible for the community itself to hire teachers and manage their children's education.

We have increased the school-enrolment ratio by 14 per cent and reduced the rate of illiteracy for people aged 15 to 60 to 17 per cent, the lowest rate in El Salvador's history.

Furthermore, in 1995 we launched the national school health programme, which encompasses educational services, medical care, nutrition, water and hygiene, improved means of access and the promotion of social participation. The programme is currently in force in 100 per cent of the rural schools in our country.

The programme has made it possible to reduce, throughout the entire system, the number of students who drop out, repeat grades or are over age. Its impact on health and nutrition has also been very evident. We are determined to find the ways and means of broadening the scope of this programme and increasing its benefits.

From 1995 to date, the budget of the Ministry of Health has doubled, and, with the help of contributions from international cooperation, we have strengthened our human resources. We have also broadened, rehabilitated and equipped a large network of facilities throughout the country, which has made it possible to increase coverage and provide higher-quality care and to reduce the incidence of disease, especially of contagious illnesses.

In 1999 we initiated a far-reaching structural reform of the entire system, with the participation of all actors concerned, governmental and non-governmental organizations, academics, individuals and trade unions.

As regards the fight against poverty, the overall poverty rate fell from 59.7 per cent in 1991 to 44.6 per cent in 1998. Over the same period, the absolute poverty rate also fell, from 28.2 per cent to 18.9 per cent. We have also reduced the rate of rural poverty by 8 percentage points, to approximately 58.6 per cent in the period under consideration.

With respect to other basic social services, water, for instance, is a very limited resource in El Salvador. Making it drinkable and supplying it to households is a priority which requires a major investment on the part of our country. The projects that are under way will soon make it possible for the first time to meet the needs of the urban population and neighbouring areas.

In the period from 1994 to 1999, the public and private sectors made a substantial effort to reduce the national housing shortage. An important part of that effort, aimed at assisting war-affected communities, was undertaken through non-governmental organizations.

These achievements, in conjunction with economic stability, support for the agricultural economy and significant investments in rural roads, have led to a considerable improvement in the quality of life of the population and to advances in poverty reduction.

Priority has been given to combating domestic violence through the adoption of relevant legislation. Furthermore, in 1998 we instituted a new penal code.

We have promoted gender equality by updating and implementing our national policy for women, which enables us to address that goal in a way that cuts across all government institutions. Joint efforts by the Government and private enterprise have aimed at consolidating such values in our society through communication strategies involving a variety of media. To fulfil its commitments with respect to social development, the Government has allocated additional resources to that sphere, and has enhanced the way in which they are used. Thus, 1998 saw the largest public investment in the social sphere in our history: 34 per cent of the national budget.

Social development is a global task for which cooperation among countries and among societies must be strengthened. We are convinced that this session will revitalize our commitment to social development and that we shall agree together to promote integrated strategies that will guarantee the well-being of our peoples.

As a preliminary step, the Government of El Salvador is promoting a new alliance among Salvadorans to ensure that all individuals, families and communities will be stakeholders in the pursuit of well-being and progress.

That is the challenge facing all the countries here assembled: we must together forge an international alliance for the sustainable social development of our peoples.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to Her Excellency Mrs. Kunzang Namgyel, Head of the Multilateral Division, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Bhutan.

Mrs. Namgyel (Bhutan): It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address this special session of the General Assembly. On behalf of the Bhutanese delegation, I would like to congratulate Mr. Theo-Ben Gurirab on his assumption of the presidency of the Assembly at this session. My delegation would like to commend the Commission for Social Development and the Preparatory Committee for their laudable work in preparing for the session. We would also like to thank the Government of Switzerland for its hospitality and for the excellent arrangements for this session.

We are gathered here five years after Copenhagen to reaffirm our commitment to the Declaration on Social Development and the Programme of Action, to review and assess progress in the implementation of the Programme, and to recommend new initiatives and actions for achieving social development. We have come with much hope and with the expectation that the outcome of the session will include realistic and concrete proposals to achieve the goals of our agreed commitments.

During the course of the debate over the past few days, many speakers have highlighted the obstacles faced by developing countries in overcoming the problems of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration, including the impact of globalization on social development, the social consequences of financial crises, the burden of foreign debt on impoverished nations and barriers to trade. They have called for concerted efforts by the international community to reaffirm our political will and to translate it into concrete action in terms of adequate resources and measures. My delegation fully concurs with those views.

Allow me to share the experience of my country in our efforts at social development. Bhutan is a land-locked least developed country with extremely mountainous terrain and remote and scattered settlements, and the costs of social development have indeed been very high for us. However, under the enlightened leadership of our king, Jigme Singye Wangchuk, we have in the course of the last four decades achieved remarkable progress. The guiding principles of our development philosophy has been people-centred, aiming towards what we in Bhutan call gross national happiness. This means that the people,

their needs, their well-being and their happiness are considered central to all development efforts. It means that economic growth is not an end in itself but only a means for achieving the goals of social and human development.

Participation by the people and decentralization are among the major goals of our development strategy. To that end, we have introduced significant changes to the system of public administration and local governance. Local development bodies have been strengthened to ensure people's participation and decision-making in all development activities, starting right at the village level.

I would also like to mention that we have spelt out our vision for peace, prosperity and happiness in the form of a document entitled "Bhutan 2020", and that we are very clear in terms of what we want to achieve and how to achieve it. During the past four decades, we have accorded the highest priority to the social sectors with about 30 per cent of our national budgets earmarked for them. Even the remotest corners of the country are being served with health, education and agricultural extension facilities. As a result, our goal of providing basic social services to the people has been largely achieved. There has been a visible improvement in the quality of life of the people. Infant and maternal mortality rates have been almost halved within the past few decades. Life expectancy has increased from 47 to 66 years. We have achieved overall child immunization coverage of 90 per cent, and 65 per cent of the Bhutanese rural population has access to safe drinking water and sanitation. Health coverage for our population is estimated to be around 90 per cent. Diseases such as leprosy and iodine-deficiency-related disorders are on the verge of eradication.

As for education, all Bhutanese citizens enjoy free education from the primary to the tertiary level. Another fast-growing initiative is non-formal education, with thousands of students, most of whom are women.

Despite our successes, we continue to face many challenges and constraints in our efforts at ensuring social development. An emerging problem is creating appropriate job opportunities to meet the rising aspirations of the younger generation. In the next five years alone, another 50,000 young people are expected to join the labour market. Another concern is the growing trend in rural-to-urban migration.

One fifth of the world's population lives in our region of South Asia. It is home to 43 per cent of the world's poorest people. While individual countries of the region have accorded high priority to social development, compounding factors of population explosion, environmental degradation and extreme poverty make achieving any meaningful development highly difficult. Consequently, there is a vast movement of destitute people in search of better livelihoods. For Bhutan, this means that as a result of the modicum of success in our development efforts as mentioned earlier, we continue to face the problem of illegal economic migrants, which poses a grave challenge to our peace, our security and our sovereignty.

Developing countries continue to look upon official development assistance as a very important source of financial support in our countries' efforts at socio-economic development. However, declining levels of official development assistance over the years do not augur well for the developing countries, particularly the least developed ones. While we thank those donors that have lived up to their commitment of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross domestic product to official development assistance, we urge the others to do the same.

I am pleased to report that the next round table meeting for Bhutan, when the Government of Bhutan and its donors will meet to review and discuss cooperation, will be held for the first time in Bhutan, in November this year. The outcome of that meeting will provide a vital input to the formulation of our ninth five-year plan. Our development partners have made significant contributions to enabling Bhutan to meet its development challenges and to the success we have achieved. On behalf of the Government and the people of Bhutan, I would like to take this opportunity to record our appreciation to all our development partners, both bilateral and multilateral, and to seek their continued cooperation and support.

In conclusion, each of our Governments, in a spirit of partnership, must ensure that we translate the noble commitments made at Copenhagen into concrete action. As for my country, we would like to assure the Assembly of our full commitment to doing so.

The Acting President: I now give the floor to His Excellency Mr. Navin Chandarpal, Special Envoy of the President of Guyana.

Mr. Chandarpal (Guyana): The 1995 World Summit for Social Development emphasized two simple truths. First, without social development and social justice there can be no peace and security within and among our nations. Secondly, in both economic and social terms, the most productive policies and investments are those that encourage people individually and nationally to maximize their capacities, resources and opportunities.

As we gather together for this special session of the General Assembly, let us remember that our heads of State and Government intended the Copenhagen Programme of Action to serve as a catalyst for positive change — a catalyst to eradicate poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and the great divide between the rich and the poor, both within and among nations; a catalyst to assume duties and responsibilities within this global village; duties to be carried out not only by Governments, but also by civil society, international organizations and other actors of influence at the national and international levels.

In fact, the presence at this special session of such a wide range of interested organizations, agencies and individuals further reminds us that the social contract concluded five years ago remains equally relevant today at the turn of the century and millennium.

Over the past five years, Member States of the United Nations have shared experiences and good practices in efforts to achieve the 10 commitments undertaken at Copenhagen. Earlier this month, another special session of the General Assembly reviewed progress and proposed further action in the important area of gender equality and equity. Similarly, within the United Nations and other forums, greater attention has been given to the development challenges of Africa and the least developed countries, the social costs of structural adjustment programmes, the dearth of resources available for social development and the root causes of underdevelopment in developing countries. The Cologne Debt Initiative, the trade negotiations for Lomé IV, the 20/20 initiative and arrangements for a special meeting on financing for development are just some of the steps taken in this regard.

The experiences of Guyana, as a small developing country seeking to provide a high quality of life for its citizens, have demonstrated the importance of political will, both nationally and internationally, for the achievement of social justice and development. The strengthening of democratic structures and institutions since 1992 has proved to be a good basis for participatory approaches to resolving poverty, unemployment, unequal access to basic social services and the marginalization of certain social groups within our society. Over the years, the budget for the social sector has steadily increased, with emphasis on health and education. Diversification of the economy, efforts to attract foreign direct investment and incentives for the private sector, including small enterprise development, have been actively pursued as part of income and employment generation strategies. Poverty alleviation programmes, housing, and safe water and sanitation policies, have been specially targeted on the poorest and most vulnerable in society.

Despite these efforts, important challenges remain. Poverty eradication remains a formidable task as policy makers seek to balance limited financial resources with the need to respond to the most basic needs of Guyanese citizens.

Building on the many initiatives taken so far, the Guyana Government has developed a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper which acknowledges that the fight to reduce poverty must be four-pronged. First, this strategy aims at stimulating economic growth through improving the business environment and providing sector-specific enhancements that will benefit the poor. Secondly, it focuses not only on improving economic and social infrastructure, but also on enhancing poor people's access to affordable health, education, water and housing facilities. Thirdly, pending the realization of the benefits of these two approaches, it will immediately provide a safety net to those who are more seriously disadvantaged. Finally, special poverty intervention programmes will be introduced to areas where prevailing poverty levels are still high.

Such an approach, however, calls into question the means at the disposal of a developing country such as Guyana to have a multi-pronged strategy to eradicate poverty. A case in point is that, despite improved educational standards in the country, as funds are channelled into the education sector, qualified graduates continue to migrate to countries with the

capacity to pay higher emoluments. This brain drain involves not only the young people, but also older professionals, including teachers and doctors, whose services in a globalizing economy have become increasingly competitive. At the same time, the demands of the labour market have had to adapt to the skills available in the country.

Another issue of critical importance to social integration, moral values and the fabric of society itself is the steady increase in violence, crime and the trafficking and abuse of illicit drugs. The drug trade not only corrupts individuals and systems by the enormity of its inducement but also threatens governance within our very country. Offenders, although largely youths, comprise all age groups, with even grandmothers being used in some cases as "mules" for the drug trade. This situation has not been helped by recent mass deportations of criminals to Guyana by the developed countries on the pretext that they were born in Guyana.

The Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action have inspired nations to take initiatives to reduce poverty. It is true that some have worked more resolutely than others and that the levels of success have varied significantly. However, one lesson stands out in relation to the efforts of developing countries. Even those who have made great efforts at the national level are severely constrained by the realities of the international climate.

This forum needs to come to grips with the reality that good governance and inclusive policies are extremely important for a better sharing of the national cake in order to reduce the level of poverty. But it is equally important to note that for most countries of the world the national cake is much too small. The principles of good governance, inclusive policies, transparency, justice and equity must also apply in the international arrangements between States.

Globalization and the rule of the market place cannot provide the vehicle for improving the conditions of the developing world. Instead of globalization serving to promote greater cooperation among States, the process is being pushed to give increasing advantage to the already developed world. The wide gap between the developed and the developing countries is widening further. Developing countries are greatly disadvantaged by their inability to have access to improved technology. In spite of the commitments made by developed countries to place a high priority on technology transfer, they continue to treat technology as a commodity on the market.

A critical need for developing countries is to improve production, productivity and market access. We need to be embraced in a world of cooperation, not stabbed by the daggers of hostile competition which globalization is promoting.

Our experiences since 1995 have taught us that despite positive interventionist measures aimed at improving social conditions, our national success in achieving the goals of the Copenhagen Programme of Action is largely dependent on the availability of resources. Sustained and improved domestic economic growth and an enabling international environment must be seen as pillars of support for the social development of developing countries. Such an environment must ensure markets for our products and more favourable and fairer terms of trade. Similarly, debt cancellation initiatives must be considered effective tools to reduce the debt stock, thus releasing much-needed funds for the social sector and increased salaries.

We need massive debt reduction and meaningful development assistance. We need a more facilitating, development-oriented arrangement for international financial institutions. Aid must be a global dove, not a Trojan horse.

In 1995 the late President of Guyana, Mr. Cheddi Jagan, made a call for a new global human order to address many of the economic and social ills recognized in the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action. In presenting a number of proposals for issues such as poverty alleviation, debt relief, employment generation, population explosion and urbanization, he called for a strong partnership between Governments and agencies from both the North and the South. This call remains relevant and necessary today.

Every country can and must take internal actions to maintain social progress, and this forum must serve to reinspire and reinvigorate all countries to do so. But this forum will be a sad disappointment and we will have failed to meaningfully use the five years since Copenhagen if major forces do not take their heads out of the sand in order to recognize that the main impediments to achieving social progress are structural in nature, deeply rooted in the massive inequality and unjust relations between States.

This special session affords us the opportunity to accelerate the process of addressing the situation of the poor and the powerless. Less than a third of 1 per cent of global income — approximately $80 billion yearly — is all that is needed to address poverty. If the rich and poor countries do not act together to overcome want and hunger, there can be no lasting peace. This is not just a partnership, but a forging of our collective destiny in the interests of all peoples.

Five years after Copenhagen, let us be true to our consciences and leave Geneva with the resolve to deal with the causes and not merely the symptoms of poverty. Let us recommit to accelerate social progress worldwide through a more enabling national environment enhanced by fair, just and equitable relations among the members of our global family.

The meeting rose at 12.55 p.m.